



This Is Where You Belong: The Art and Science of Loving the Place You Live

Melody Warnick

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In the spirit of Gretchen Rubin's megaseller *The Happiness Project* and Eric Weiner's *The Geography of Bliss*, a journalist embarks on a project to discover what it takes to love where you live

The average restless American will move 11.7 times in a lifetime. For Melody Warnick, it was move #6, from Austin, Texas, to Blacksburg, Virginia, that threatened to unhinge her. In the lonely aftermath of unpacking, she wondered: *Aren't we supposed to put down roots at some point? How does the place we live become the place we want to stay?* This time, she had an epiphany. Rather than hold her breath and hope this new town would be her family's perfect fit, she would figure out how to fall in love with it—no matter what.

How we come to feel at home in our towns and cities is what Warnick sets out to discover in *This Is Where You Belong*. She dives into the body of research around place attachment—the deep sense of connection that binds some of us to our cities and increases our physical and emotional well-being—then travels to towns across America to see it in action. Inspired by a growing movement of placemaking, she examines what its practitioners are doing to create likeable locales. She also speaks with frequent movers and loyal stayers around the country to learn what draws highly mobile Americans to a new city, and what makes us stay. The best ideas she imports to her adopted hometown of Blacksburg for a series of Love Where You Live experiments designed to make her feel more locally connected. Dining with her neighbors. Shopping Small Business Saturday. Marching in the town Christmas parade.

Can these efforts make a halfhearted resident happier? Will Blacksburg be the place she finally stays? What Warnick learns will inspire you to embrace your own community—and perhaps discover that the place where you live right now . . . is home.

From the Hardcover edition.

This Is Where You Belong: The Art and Science of Loving the Place You Live Details

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You Live Melody Warnick

From Reader Review This Is Where You Belong: The Art and Science of Loving the Place You Live for online ebook

Emily says

This was a very thought-provoking book for me. I was attracted to it because my husband and I have mostly been "Movers" during our life together, like the author and her family. The longest we've lived in one home was 10 years, but several were a year or even a little less, so the average is probably about 3 years. I always find myself victim of the "grass is greener on the other side" syndrome, wanting to move to places we vacation, surfing Trulia and Zillow, looking for that perfect next place, and expecting things to be better somewhere else than wherever we are currently living. After full-time traveling for the past few years, I think we are ready to find a home base that we really enjoy, even though we still plan to travel. This book has given me some good tools to put into practice to try to bond with the place we choose to be our next base. Using some of Warnick's ideas, I want to get more involved in the town and community, rather than always feeling like a newcomer or restless, uncommitted outsider.

Melora says

I waffled between 3 and 4 stars for this. Mostly because the book didn't offer many insights, and I'm annoyed with myself because I kind of knew in advance that it wouldn't. I mean, coming to appreciate a community just isn't that complicated. You go to local events, patronize local businesses, participate in the locally available activities, and try to be friendly. Still, the author worked this up to a 250 page book, and kept it tolerably interesting.

Part of the issue, for me, is that Melody Warnick is looking at exploring and coming to love the people and amenities of a *city*, and I bought the book hoping for insights on integrating myself into a much smaller community. Melody, moving to Blacksburg, VA (pop. 42,620 in 2010, according to Wikipedia) from Austin, TX (pop. 931,830, also according to Wiki) feels like she is moving to a tiny place with little to do. And, comparatively speaking, I guess she's right. But for a reader living in a one-stop-sign rural community, where the nearest larger community has about 3,000 people, and the nearest "city," where said reader shops, sends her daughter to school, etc., has 4,000 people, the complaints about Blacksburg sound... well, like something that our hypothetical reader would *love* to have to cope with! It was early in the book, page 45, to be exact, when Melody says "there aren't many towns left in America without a Target within thirty miles" and I realized that I was probably *not* the target demographic for this book. I'm at least fifty miles from the nearest Target. Not that Melody is recommending Target shopping – she actually suggests, sensibly, that one does better things for one's community by shopping at locally owned businesses. But my point is that she is making recommendations based on certain options being available, and for readers in significantly different situations many of her suggestions will be of only modest help.

Still, there was a lot I enjoyed here. I really liked her focus on building communities, neighborliness, supporting small businesses, participating in festivals, hikes, etc. For readers with adequate budgets her ideas of dining out at the same restaurant every single week, joining a CSA, taking part in a "flash shopping mob" (okay, this idea actually just strikes me as weird) would probably be fun, and would certainly boost the local economy. While I didn't get any "Oh my gosh! I never thought of *that*!" revelations from this, there were a number of times when I thought, "Yeah, I really *should* make more of an effort to get to the Farmers' Market, explore the "local" trails, etc. She does say some inane stuff – "When you're happy (and healthy),

then you're happy (and healthy) where you live,” “Experience joy for as long as you're there,” etc – but given the title and the genre I expected that. So, no big insights here, but some fine reminders of ways to enjoy and support one's community.

Caroline says

NO SPOILERS

I want to put *This Is Where You Belong* into the hands of every chronic “mover” and every “rooted”--that is, those people who keep moving in search of the perfect fit and those who are the exact opposite, who love where they live and never want to move. I found it affirming and enlightening in equal parts, and somehow it made me love where I live even more than I already did.

The book opens with author Melody Warnick moving into her new home in Blacksburg, Virginia--new town (and new state) number six. This move was the catalyst for her--a chronic “mover”--to begin questioning the why behind her restlessness. It was time to stop moving once and for all, she decided. Using her new life in Blacksburg as a guinea pig, she set about on a series of ten bold experiments to become rooted. The book is part personal, documenting her experiments in entertaining detail, and part investigative journalism. It's very liberally sprinkled with research to bolster her points and lend legitimacy to her experiments--she didn't choose these ten experiments randomly. In each chapter, she also interviewed experts and influential rooted citizens who made appreciable improvements to their towns or were especially representative of an experiment. What she presented here is fascinating, and I was frequently inspired.

What struck me is how I never gave much thought to why, exactly, I'm rooted (or “place attached,” to use another term from the book). I liked Warnick's clear and direct writing in explaining. I also liked, and found surprising, the fact that the way to become place attached doesn't involve anything dramatic (but it does involve a great deal of pro-activity). Connecting with neighbors in a significant way is important. Patronizing local businesses is important. (This chapter is crucial and enough to make the book worth reading.) Getting involved in local politics is important. These aren't, perhaps, particularly revelatory, but what Warnick did was give proper recognition to those simple things that foster place attachment; to dispel the all-too-common belief that it's the big things (a.k.a. plentiful amenities) that make people love where they live; to get movers to stop the the insanity. *This Is Where You Belong* honors what's unsung. It's needed.

Warnick's book is engaging, very readable from the start, and I enthusiastically recommend it for all nonfiction fans. In particular, I can't recommend it enough for chronic movers, those continually disappointed in their quest for happiness via the perfect town. For them, the book is actually an excellent practical guide, as they can replicate Warnick's experiments step-by-step to become rooted, if they so wish. (There's even a checklist at the end of each chapter.) Rooteds can gain a lot from this too; *This Is Where You Belong* is one the few nonfiction books I've read that's changed how I now operate in the world. My expectations were completely exceeded.

Karin says

I listened to this on audio, and it was a super easy listen. There are really interesting tidbits and facts peppered throughout this nonfic book about becoming committed to your local community, but I realized

after 15 (FIFTEEN?! How is this possible...) years of living in Chicago, I've already done pretty much all of these things. Some of the tips and ideas are pretty classist to be frank. The most interesting chapter was the one about how communities come together after disaster. I wish this book had more information that covered bringing community together in less of a privileged upper class way.

Leigh Kramer says

The blend of memoir and research exploring how to feel at home where you live gave me so much to think about. I really appreciated Warnick's exploration of what helps us feel at home in a place and what we can do to cultivate that feeling, as well as how our personality can impact it. Some of it seemed common sense but I think we could all do with a refresher course on how to better embrace your community—even if you're like me and know you're not where you're supposed to be. Warnick is writing from a fairly privileged perspective so your mileage may vary in terms of takeaways. But I'm really glad I read it, especially as I consider where my next home will be.

Carmen says

Asking myself, 'What would someone who loves Blacksburg do?' had become a regular mental refrain. 'Would a person who loves their town go to the concert in the park? Would a person who loves their town pick up the nasty piece of trash in the road?' Yes. Yes, they would.

Sometimes I wonder about journalists. Oftentimes it seems that their books stem from some random idea or vague concept that they stretch into a book for no reason.

To me, Carmen, this book seems almost laughably basic. Warnick is a person who sees other towns as future homes to her perfect self. "My life would be perfect if I lived in Townsville! In Townsville I will be better, smarter, kinder, have better friends, and be a better writer! I will be a better person over all! My key to future happiness lies in Townsville!"

It's like a more expensive and complicated version of New Year's resolutions. Whereas us non-rich people just start the New Year off with grandiose plans and ideas about how to 'better ourselves,' Warnick and her ilk - 'movers' - tie their ideas of a better life and a better future as a magically better person to a place.

"If only I lived in Townsville, my life would be perfect!"

Of course, even Warnick realizes she's lying to herself at some level. She moves and moves and moves and moves, uprooting her family each time - but she's the same person wherever she goes. Unsurprisingly.

So when her husband gets a job in Blacksburg, Virginia, Warnick decides to try a new tactic. She will make this work. She will love her town. She will get involved and she will be a shining part of the community!

Warnick dedicates a chapter to each goal she has in her new community.

Walk more.

Buy local.

*Get to know my neighbors.
Do fun stuff.
Explore nature.
Volunteer.
Eat local.
Become more political.
Create something new.
Stay loyal through hard times.*

As I said earlier, to me this seems glaringly obvious. Of course you want to walk around your neighborhood, get to know people, and do fun stuff in your town in order to love it and get to know it better. But I guess this isn't as obvious as I thought.

Moving offered absolution for whatever failures I'd amassed in my present town: the disappointing friendships, the inescapable, guilt-inducing commitments, the taunting list of unfinished home renovation projects. Each time the moving truck pulled away from the curb, these petty vexations and regrets vanished. Thus freed and forgiven, I'd relish the prospect of beginning again in the next city.

I'm confused. Does she not like her friends? Just a tip: they are not your 'friends' if you feel like you have to move out of state to escape from them. She feels trapped by 'commitments?' I just don't get it. Is she unable to say 'no' to people or stand up for herself? There's got to be a better way to manage your life than be like, "Oh, no! Sara thinks we're 'friends!' I can't keep avoiding her at the grocery store! Also, I hate being on the PTA! We have to move!" Like, what? o.O Just say 'no.' Or bow out. Or tell people to fuck off.

We'd gone to Austin expecting perfection. How dare Austin not be perfect? Then, since it wasn't, the insidious thought came that maybe life would be perfect, or at least better, if I lived somewhere else. ... What started as THIS IS THE PLACE! would be edged out over time by geographic FOMO... a vague dread that someplace better existed in the world and I didn't live there.

I can't imagine living this way, permanently disappointed in where I was and constantly hungering for some mythical perfect place that doesn't exist - uprooting myself every two years or so to keep dragging my family on some quest. What a waste. I don't mean to be dismissive, but it's completely baffling to me. Completely baffling.

I'm also NOT a 'mover.' I have moved and lived in different places, certainly - but not due to 'fun' or 'boredom' or 'wanderlust' or 'I will be perfect if only I live in Townsville!'. The reasons me, my friends, and my family move is because of money. Someone gets a job, someone can't afford to live in x neighborhood anymore. Moving is serious business (and money!) and isn't really taken lightly in my circle. So the idea of these people shuffling around the country on a whim is hard for me to swallow in the first place. We are right at the beginning of the book and already I'm like, "I can't relate to these people."

Things would definitely be better this time. I would be better in Blacksburg.

Specifically, I would amass a well-curated collection of affectionate but not emotionally needy friends. I'd meditate. I'd take up gardening and yoga. I'd cook more, with ingredients like organic bok choy. (My kids would like it now.) I'd write with precision and emotional depth. I'd make more money doing it.

Warnick only confuses and perplexes me further as the book goes on. She's the type of person who gets these ideas and then only partially or lackluster-ly follows through on them. That mildly annoys me. For instance,

she makes a goal of completing the 'Scenic Seven' - a set of locations to hike or bike in order to appreciate the beauty of Blacksburg. She doesn't do all seven, she does (I don't know for sure) five or something and then just stops. So I wasn't surprised at all later when her daughter idly proposes to start a Blacksburg Sidewalk Chalk Festival and she enthusiastically agrees, pursues the idea, brings it up at committee, and starts the wheel turning. Then she just chickens out (her words) and ends up just giving kids some chalk at a festival or something. She scraps the judges, the professionals, and the prizes. Then she's kind of 'meh' about the whole thing.

She really frustrated me, and I feel like a jerk for being frustrated. Who the fuck cares if she didn't complete the seven trails?!? Who the fuck cares if the chalk event wasn't the exciting event she originally planned? The kids had fun, right? And if she was a normal human - my friend or relative, some acquaintance - I wouldn't care. But in a book it is kind of frustrating and annoying to hear her set up and rhapsodize about these goals and then just go, "Oh, well, that's good enough. Who cares." I know I'm being unfair, but that's how I felt.

But I admire her for taking basic steps to learn to love and be happy where she's landed. It's admirable that she makes all this effort to bond with her new city - the first time she's really tried to do this. Some chapters were actually pretty uplifting. Hearing her talk about buying local made ME want to do more local shopping. Hearing her rhapsodize about the benefits of walking around your neighborhood made ME get up and go for walks. Reading about her adventures with local cuisine made me hungry and also proud of MY local places.

One of the most touching chapters ends with her family befriending a Sri Lankan family next door, even ending up inviting all of them over to her house for a dinner and being comfortable enough to have them watch her kids in a pinch, and vice versa. It was really nice. I'm a big proponent of knowing your neighbors.

She seems shocked to consider that people might enjoy living in a place more due to having friends and family there. She pities a woman who lives in a 733-population town. Why doesn't this woman move?!?!? She thinks with frustration. But then she's like, "Oh, her grandchildren are here. She's known and loved in the community, where she's worked and served for decades." This is the kind of thing that had me rolling my eyes throughout the book. o.O To me, it's obvious you would think twice about leaving a place where you had strong roots. Of course she loves being near her children and grandchildren. I was looking at Warnick as if she was slightly dense. o.O And most things in the book are basic like this. I mean, that's the most extreme example, but the things that surprised her were pretty obvious to me.

She also does things in a strange way sometimes. It's as if it's really hard for her to make things happen organically in her life. She has to force it. This is never more obvious than when she becomes determined to be a 'regular' at a local restaurant. After eating there a few times, things aren't working out - the restaurant has lots of young workers and turnover, so making 'friends' with the waitstaff is hard. Also, she doesn't seem particularly thrilled with the place. I was like, GO SOMEWHERE ELSE. This is crazy that I have to explain this. In order to be a regular, it should be natural. I love the food here. The waitress is kind/funny. They have great specials. My friends also like to go here on the regular. BAM. Instant restaurant-loyalty. I don't know how this is hard or how she decided to randomly stick with a place instead of naturally finding a great one that charmed and thrilled her. ???

I probably should mention the data part of the book, in which Warnick travels the country (instead of staying in the town she's trying to love!) interviewing people who love their towns and telling us statistics. But of course, it's her personal story that interests me, not the fact that 83 percent of metro-area Atlantans given to charity out of a sense of community. I'm always focused on the personal, as you well know if you've read any of my reviews. It seems to annoy people sometimes, but relationships and people are what interest me.

TL;dr - I don't know what is really the point. Especially (view spoiler) Most of the stuff... actually, all of the stuff she talked about doing to 'help you love your community' seemed extremely common sense to me. Although I realize it may not be obvious to others, if it was surprising to you to learn this stuff than that is great. :)

The book was mildly interesting. I wasn't exactly bored, but it was far from gripping. It was okay. *shrug* I don't know whether to give it two stars or three.

Janssen says

This was so excellent. Full review here: <http://www.everyday-reading.com/2016/...>

Jane Dugger says

This was a very thought provoking book especially for someone who doesn't care for where they live. (I'm probably the only person in Denver who feels this way.) It was not what I expected which was finding where you belong. (I should have read the subtitle.) It's about making the place you live your own. Ms Warnick has some great ideas; I have requested the paper copy so I can see her helpful end of chapter suggestions.

If you are looking for ways to contribute and engage in your city/community/neighborhood this is a great primer.

PS this would be a fantastic book club pick.

Cheryl says

This will either work for you, or it won't, depending on whether you can empathize with any of the diverse points of view Warnick offers. For example, I do believe her when she speaks of how starting over in a fresh place can help one start over in one's healthy living habits. I also appreciate her specific examples of *how* to actually connect with one's community: it's obvious to say "get out more, volunteer, shop local," but Warnick gives both narrative examples and checklists.

For example, there are mentions of geocaching, Good Neighbor Day on 9-28 & Neighborday on the last Saturday of April.

I would wish that there was more mention of moving to a new house or neighborhood, but as it turns out, many of the tips would work fine for that, too. (I should know, having moved five times in two decades within central CC.)

Her current town seemed like a winner to me immediately, and the more she worked to connect with it, the more I realized just how lucky she is to be there while writing the book. So much that she can do, I cannot either here in Carson City, or back in my family home in WI. Oh well.

I do wish there was an acknowledgement that everyone should consider moving (or at least doing some not-

touristy traveling) a couple of times in their lifetimes, to broaden one's horizons, because otherwise one is likely to assume that everyone else is either 1. just like them or 2. exotic.

I only wanted to skim this now because I want to see if I'll be able to use it later, when we do move after my husband's retirement. I know we'll be moving often because we want to see the country, but I'm checking to see if it's likely that this book will help me learn each new area faster, feel comfortable there sooner, enjoy my stay better. Well, considering that I kept getting sucked into the narrative text, I know I'll definitely check it out again when the time comes. And, given the ideas I see on the checklists, I'm so sure that it'll help that I expect I might actually buy it.

Feisty Harriet says

It's no secret that I really do not love my new city (I've been here just over a year). I picked this up to attempt to learn how to appreciate it. I've got so many thoughts, some of which I'm still mulling. Warnick makes many good points, and there are certainly some suggestions I could employ to better appreciate where I live. Also, full disclosure, in many MANY margins I wrote my reasons and possible excuses for not loving (or even liking) the place I am right now....this mental change is going to be a slog, ya'll.

Lesa says

I don't know when a nonfiction book has hit so close to home for me. Perhaps it's because I'm a "Mover", one of those people who pack up and move for one reason or another. For me, it has been jobs - in Upper Arlington, Ohio; Huron, Ohio; Port Charlotte, Florida; Lee County, Florida; Glendale, Arizona; Evansville, Indiana. While journalist Melody Warnick had to learn to love Blacksburg, Virginia, I never had a problem falling in love with Arizona. Three and a half years after leaving, I still miss Arizona. Warnick's investigation, her determined "Love Where You Live" experiment, is fascinating in *This Is Where You Belong: The Art and Science of Loving the Place You Live*.

Melody Warnick and her family were eager to move to Blacksburg from Austin, Texas, when her husband, an English professor, landed a job at Virginia Tech. Warnick had just turned thirty-six, and the family's average stay in any city was 3.2 years. But, she wasn't immediately drawn to Blacksburg in the Blue Ridge Mountains. As a journalist, she decided to examine the idea of making a city into a place to love. "What if a place becomes the right place only by our choosing to love it?" She made a conscious effort to love Blacksburg, Virginia.

Because she's a journalist, Warnick set about methodically learning to love Blacksburg. She interviewed people, studied why people gravitate to one place or another, how they become involved in a city, what connects them to other people there. Walking the city, learning to find your way around it is an important step, and walkable cities are inviting to outsiders. She has a chapter about buying local, supporting local stores that make the community different from other cities. Meet your neighbors. Learn what is fun to do in your city. Get out into nature. Volunteer in order to feel as if you are helping your community. Eat local food. Get involved in local politics. Create something. The "Stay Loyal" chapter was fascinating, focusing on people who suffered through tragedies in their cities. As Melody Warnick worked through her experiment,

she found herself more attached to Blacksburg.

This Is Where You Belong is a fascinating book. And, maybe I found it so fascinating because it explained a great deal about my own passion for Arizona. That was the one place I lived as an adult that I took most of the steps Warnick mentions, although I'd consider "home" the Phoenix area, not just Glendale. I walked, supported local businesses, volunteered, did so much that was fun, and even found my third place there. Warnick and others refer to it as "place attachment".

It would be interesting to see if Warnick's process works for people, if they can force a place to feel like home. This Is Where You Belong is a fascinating book. I just don't know when/if I'll find that place again for myself, and, honestly, I'm not willing, right now, to put that kind of effort into it.

Lisa Vegan says

I read this with a book group discussion and I'm so glad it was chosen for the spring read.

While there was no new earth shattering information for me, there was so many things worth thinking about and considering. It took me a while to fully get into it because at first I didn't identify with the author, but the more I read along the more I liked the book.

I'd already done some of what's suggested to feel at home but I see now that I can do much more. I'm hoping that remembering some of the tips and actions mentioned in the book will be useful for me when I have to move, whether it's to a different dwelling, neighborhood, city, or state, especially if I have to move to a place I don't immediately find desirable to live.

At first I just read it as an autobiography, and I was enjoying her journey. I even eventually identified with her, given what she was researching and what she said about what her ideal town might be good at: roller coasters, art museums, independent bookstores. She "got me" with those three examples.

To give an idea of what subjects she covers, the chapter titles are: The Lost Art of Staying Put, Lace Up Your Sneakers, Buy Local, Say Hi to Your Neighbors, Do Something Fun, Commune with Nature, Volunteer, Eat Local Food, Get More Political, Create Something, Stay Loyal, Settle Down.

The author was a "mover" and was trying to learn to be a "stayer". I'm definitely a "stayer" and in some ways a "rooted" too.

I thought the mix of her story, others' personal stories, and hard research results were interesting and highly entertaining, and smartly done and well written. I thought many of the statistics and the studies reported on were fascinating and I enjoyed learning the information. While much was common sense, there were some surprises.

She presents many good ideas about things to do to encourage loving where you're living now, including a helpful list at the end of every chapter. This is a book I'd actually like to own, but for now at least I'll hope that wherever I will live my library will have it available for borrowing. As I read it I thought on one particular friend (an incredibly rooted one) and I've told her about it and encouraged her to read it. I'll even consider getting it for her for her next birthday.

There were so many fun activities mentioned that could be used by everybody, whether they live in rural areas (she didn't really focus too much on them but many of the ideas could work there too) or towns or big cities. I'd never heard of cash mobs, the chalk festival sounded fun, all the ideas for community building seemed worth doing, whether it was to get to know people or to support people/businesses in your area.

I'd love to see all city/town planners and leaders read this, but also everybody. I know that if many people in my immediate neighborhood read it and even a few people tried to implement a couple of the actions in this book, where I live would be a better place. I think that's true for every city, town, area, neighborhood, street/block, probably everywhere in the world.

It took me a long time to read this book. I was reading it concurrently with other books. But every chapter stands on its own and it worked well for me to read it chapter by chapter. Overall, it was a very enjoyable reading experience.

Paul Brannan says

Oh dear! A book of platitudes that attempts to add gravitas by citing lots and lots of research or, what I would less charitably call, statements of the bleedin' obvious.

The vacuity of its 257 pages is neatly summarized by the closing 'Love Where You Live Principles'. There are 11, but these three should give a good sense of what you'll be getting into:

- When you're happy (and healthy) then you're happy (and healthy) where you live
- Experience joy for as long as you're there
- If you want to love your town, act like someone who loves your town would act

The premise of the book is a good one. Americans move a lot - on average nearly 12 times - for work, for health, for family, for retirement, or simply to find a better place.

For author Warnick, the grass always seemed greener somewhere else until she decided to take stock of what made her happy and what she could do to feel settled and part of the community of Blacksburg, Virginia, aka Bleaksburg.

The chapter headings tell the story: Buy Local, Say Hi to Your Neighbors, Commune with Nature, Volunteer, Eat Local Food, Get More Political, etc and there are some good suggestions on how to integrate, but the more I read the more it felt like a magazine piece stretched to book-length.

So here's a suggestion: By just reading the bullet-points at the end of each chapter you could save yourself a ton of time and free yourself up to engage with something noble, or civic, or fun.

Mickey says

This book is in the same family as Gretchen Rubin's The Happiness Project: Or Why I Spent a Year Trying to Sing in the Morning, Clean My Closets, Fight Right, Read Aristotle, and Generally Have More Fun. This particular branch of the self-help tree concerns itself with giving practical, useful advice to people with

vague feelings of unhappiness and disconnection. First world problems? I guess that label fits. But I'm not convinced one needs to feel guilty or embarrassed because some people have it worse. Gretchen Rubin's book asked, "How can I be happier?" and Melody Warnick's book asks, "How can I feel more attached to where I live?" Both books take subjective dilemmas and seek to resolve them through a combination of research and anecdotal information. I enjoy this brand of inquiry, and I hope that books like these find a wide audience, so there can be more of them for me to read.

Since I've seen some reviewers questioning whether such a book will really be useful to anyone or if most of the suggestions and strategies are "common-sense", I'd have to say that it depends on where you're coming from. I am definitely a Mover, who, moreover, was raised by Movers. There was not even a common thread to put me into a larger community of Movers; I was no military brat. We simply moved quite a bit as a family. As a result, I have no real experience with having a hometown, and the feelings of rootlessness are sometimes acutely painful. My sisters and I have talked about this, but it's always been something that feels like it can't be helped or remedied at this point. My sisters have gone on to have families of their own, and each made sure to give their children a hometown, even though they both have said they don't feel like their new town is *their* home, even if it is where their husbands grew up.

I've stayed a Mover and continue to move every so often. It's mostly pleasant. I like the places I live, but it's always a sort of an offhand, careless affection. I like being there, but I'm also fine with leaving. I remember I first questioned this "lifestyle choice" when I was on a visit to Park River, North Dakota, where my grandparents lived and where I was born (but from where I moved before I turned two). People would ask me where I was from and I would say, "Pittsburgh," (where I was living at the time). I realized that if someone asked me that exact same question in Pittsburgh, I would say, "North Dakota". Why the answers would change and what I needed to get across was the information that, "I'm not from here," and that felt like the right answer in both situations. Right but depressing as hell.

Over the years, I have made several attempts to attach to someplace. I even think choosing to teach was motivated in part by the idea of becoming a member of a community, but it never seemed to work out. The attempts were always repelled in ways that now seem darkly comical. I was surrounded by others who were securely planted, but it still felt as elusive to me as ever. I started to think that perhaps rootedness was a condition that I was probably never going to really achieve, and that it was really an ability that some people have and some people lack.

So when I saw this book, I thought it was rather perfect. To feel at home in a place is not as easy for some as it is with others. Like an autistic person requires explicit instruction in social niceties, a nomad might need explicit instructions in how to feel connected to a place. If you were raised in a place or in a family where feeling connected was as easy and natural as breathing, good for you. Let's just acknowledge that your experience was likely not universal.

Onto reviewing the book:

Warnick's research is top notch. She has clearly done her homework for this book. She talked to a lot of people and heard a lot of stories about how others connect to their environments. I would encourage her to take a note from Rubin as to spending a bit more time ruminating on the implications of why and how something works or the nuances of a "trick"-just expand the view a bit-zoom out a little more. I know some people were turned off by Rubin's know-it-all attitude, but her thorough examinations are, I believe, one of the most valuable things her books offer. I believe Warnick did a great job in this respect in the last two chapters "Stay Loyal" and "Settle Down". They were incredible explorations into how tragedy can shape a community and her rethinking of the rigid categories of Movers and Stayers, but I think her earlier chapters

could benefit from being a little less focused on giving advice and spend more time looking at the bigger picture.

I thought this book was marvelous. It addresses a current modern problem that is often sorely felt but not often explored in a thorough way. I think the premise of the book was wonderful, and I think the execution was thoughtful and informative. There is a lot of current information about resources out there to help you in bonding with your city that I had no idea about. It seems that there are even ways that a Stayer might use in order to get to know and love their city better.

If you have an impulse to strengthen your ties with your city, I would recommend this book.

Shannon says

Close to eight years ago, just a month after our wedding, my husband and I loaded up a truck and moved from Michigan to Richmond, Virginia. Neither of us had jobs in our new city, which we only visited once and chose with some pretty limited knowledge. On paper, it wasn't the smartest decision I ever made. In reality? The best.

We adore Richmond and we've loved it from day one, but I'm fascinated by the factors that push people to live where they do and knew I had to read Melody Warnick's *This Is Where You Belong: The Art and Science of Loving the Place You Live*. After moving several times, Warnick and her family landed in Blacksburg, Virginia, determined to stay rooted. Instead of picking up and looking for the right place, she would make her family love where they were. Armed with research on place attachment, which is the deep bond between a person and a place, Warnick came up with ten steps she could take to help her fall in love with Blacksburg.

Many of Warnick's ideas are familiar (they're how I fell in love with Richmond!) but what's great about *This Is Where You Belong* is that it takes common sense and makes it actionable. At times some of the suggestions feel slightly privileged (joining a cash mob, donating money within your community, etc.), but they are well-balanced by the more affordable and free ideas she compiles. And even though I'm already in a serious, cozy relationship with my city, I took some of her tips to heart. There's always room for even more attachment to a great place.

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