

## The Value of Connections on our Wellness

Can you remember your feelings during the social distancing regulations that came with COVID? Isolation? Fear? The need to connect with others? Anguish? Anxiety? Mental stress? And even insomnia? This pandemic taught us the value of connection and the magical qualities that our connections bring to our lives.

### Connection is one of the most basic of human needs

It is not hard to observe the inter-connectedness of nature and all the living systems including those of plants, animals, microorganisms in our universe. Everything relates to everything else.

We, humans are inherently social creatures, wired biologically from our early years for connection and companionship. We create relationships with our parents, siblings, extended family, friends, peer group, school, society etc. We constantly seek companionship and support as we go through life's stages. As we mature into adults our relationships change, we seek a primary relationship, we seek common interest friendship groups and we embrace & enjoy work-related connections. Becoming parents we discover more intimate connections. During the later years of life as we mature our connections become more profound.

Despite this connection some of us go through life without a sense of truly belonging, and many of us are unfortunately becoming increasingly disconnected in today's fast-paced and digitally connected world. It's all too easy to overlook the significance of genuine human connection and the sense of belonging that comes from being part of a close-knit community. We may think we are connected online but many of us are disconnected in life. Not just from other people but also from ourselves, from the natural world and from something bigger than ourselves. Loneliness levels are exploding all over the world.

Our culture promotes material possessions over human relationships and we are seen as weak and needy if we look for connections.





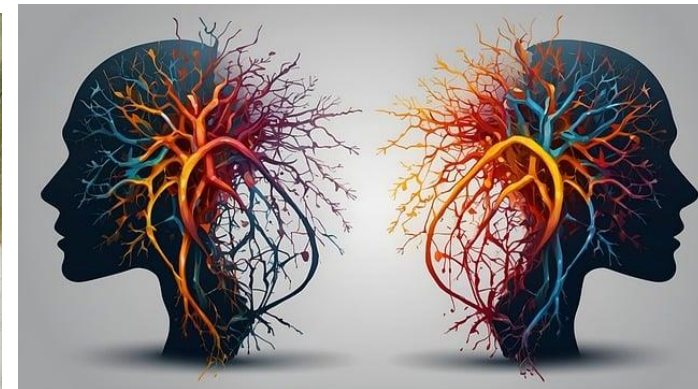
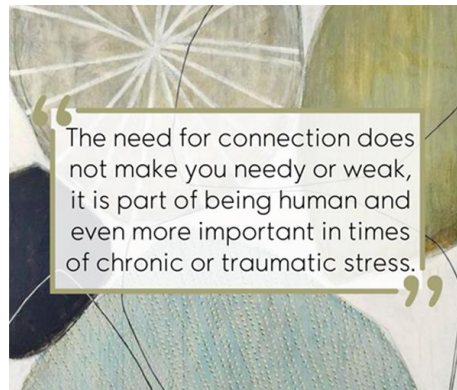
## How Social Media is contributing to our Social Isolation

- The more time a person spends online, the less time there is for real-world interactions.
- Social media promotes feelings of being excluded, for example when one sees photos of friends having fun at an event to which they were not invited.
- The lavish lifestyle of the rich and famous presented on social media may elicit feelings of envy and a belief that others lead happier and more successful lives leading to more isolation.

## Benefits of Connection

1. Cultivating a sense of belonging strengthens one's resilience, self confidence and empowers individuals to face difficulties, adapt, and bounce back from challenging circumstances.
2. Staying connected promotes feelings of well-being, reduces stress and anxiety, better sleep wards off feelings of sadness, loneliness, generally improved overall mental health.
3. Connections make it easier to ask for help when in need.
4. It can alleviate feelings of alienation, enhance social bonds, and instill a sense of purpose.
3. People with meaningful social connections feel happy and content.

Did you know that Oxytocin is looked at as the hormone for social connection, has the potential to facilitate human "bonding" and is being considered in a number of future studies investigating its effects on relationships in people with social anxiety or autism.





Take small steps towards connection, do not force it

### Connections with a twist

- Spend time with a pet
- Work with a therapist or health professional
- Attend a yoga, art or dance class
- Text or call a close friend
- Visit a trusted family member or good friend
- Accept a hug
- Meditate / Pray

### Connections: How to cultivate stronger, genuine and more supportive connections

- Know your values and what you need from your relationships.
- Form authentic connections with others
- Reflect on your interactions to engage with the most fulfilling ones often.
- Be authentic and honest in every interaction.
- Recognize that everyone has different connectivity needs. If a relationship never grows beyond 'acquaintance level' or just isn't working, it's okay.



### Connections: Places where you create connections

- At home with family members
- Social circles/friends
- Work relationships
- Skill-building environments
- Hobbies/interest-based environments
- Church/spiritual communities



## Words for the Wise

In a world that often prioritizes material wealth and technological advancements, the importance of connection and community can get overshadowed. However, recognizing the significance of genuine human connection and fostering a sense of belonging within a supportive community cannot be underestimated, particularly when it comes to our wellness. Prioritizing investments in our relationships and building seamless connections can yield profound benefits for our mental well-being, enabling us to face life's challenges with resilience, feel understood, and grow as individuals. Let us embrace the power of connection and community, intertwining its thread within the fabric of our lives for a healthier, happier future.



We heal through connection. It's that simple and that uncomplicated.

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**Sources & further reading:** [www.pixabay.com](http://www.pixabay.com); <https://heartradianceaustralia.com.au/blog/the-value-of-connection>; <https://www.humanconnection.net.au/connect>; <https://intentionalhealing.co.za/2021/06/30/why-we-heal-in-connection/>; <https://executive.berkeley.edu/thought-leadership/blog/importance-connections-our-well-being#:~:text=Connections%20can%20be%20just%20as,factors%20and%20boost%20life%20expectancy>. <https://executive.berkeley.edu/thought-leadership/blog/importance-connections-our-well-being#:~:text=The%20Benefits%20of%20Interpersonal%20Connection&text=Research%20has%20shown%20that%20the,a%20buffer%20in%20difficult%20times>. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/the-athletes-way/201705/face-face-connectedness-oxytocin-and-your-vagus-nerve>; [https://www.cell.com/neuron/pdfExtended/S0896-6273\(16\)30024-1#:~:text=found%20that%20oxytocin%20transforms%20sensory,sensory%20perception%20deficits%20in%20autism](https://www.cell.com/neuron/pdfExtended/S0896-6273(16)30024-1#:~:text=found%20that%20oxytocin%20transforms%20sensory,sensory%20perception%20deficits%20in%20autism).

