

Social connectedness CTA

What is social connectedness?

According to studies in neuroscience, social connection is the experience of feeling close and connected to others. It involves feeling loved, cared for, and valued, and forms the basis of interpersonal relationships.⁽¹⁾

Importance of social connectedness:

Social connectedness is essential for us as human beings. Through our day to day lives, the smallest of interactions we could be having with people could go a long way in being beneficial for both our physical and mental health.⁽¹⁾ This may be a fact that you already know, but going out and being social can definitely be easier said than done at times. Unfortunately, social isolation does have its consequences, leading to an overall lower sense of satisfaction with life,⁽²⁾ and being a severe risk factor for suicidal outcomes.⁽³⁾ With COVID 19 exacerbating social isolation to an extreme,⁽¹¹⁾ we wanted to give you some activities you could incorporate in your day to day lives to help out.

Aside from short term benefits such as lowering your risk for anxiety and depression,⁽⁸⁾ gaining higher self-esteem, better sleep,⁽⁴⁾ being more trusting and building cooperative relationships, social connectedness can also be beneficial in the long term, strengthening our immune system⁽⁹⁾ and making us more resilient to stress factors.⁽¹⁰⁾

Ways to improve social connectedness:

1) Do something you love:⁽⁵⁾

Studies have shown that working on hobbies on a day to day basis improves your amounts of social connectedness. As you grow more in your hobbies, this can lead to interacting with other people who are interested in the same work as you are. Aside from this, hobbies have also been shown to be correlated to lowering blood pressure, your total cortisol and giving you a perception of better physical functioning.

2) Step out of your comfort zone:⁽⁷⁾

It is okay to feel social anxiety when trying to make new connections. A great way to do this is by reframing stress. Physically, there's actually no real difference between excitement and anxiety. What it really comes down to is how you label it. Seek therapy if needed, a therapist who practises cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can help with this.

3) Look for different connections:

People you could interact with come in all types of contexts. This can be your family, close friends, people in school or volunteer groups. Through interacting with these various groups of people, you start branching out to more groups, which lead to more interaction with people.

4) Reduce screen time:⁽⁶⁾

We're sure that this is one that you've heard before, but it does have some evidence behind it! Screen time use has been linked to exacerbating an already poor social environment.

5) Be prepared for some connections to rupture:

With great social connections, can also come ones which don't go too well. This is to be expected, but it shouldn't be a deterrent for you when it comes to thinking about social connectedness. These connections can be seen as learning experiences, to let you know what you should look out to avoid in the future.

6) Learn how to manage conflict:

Oftentimes, relationships can get estranged when both sides of the conversation don't want to settle any issue that might be happening between them. Taking that step to address the issue can help retain and even flourish your current relationships.

7) Get to know yourself better:

Learn to love yourself and enjoy spending time with yourself. You can do this by examining your reactions to events, keeping a dream or a regular journal and picturing what your perfect day would be like. This will help you to enjoy spending time with others.

8) Taking initiative:

A lot of times, we have friends or family who we could meet up with, but don't actually have any plans with them. Taking the initiative in setting up a plan with them can go a long way, as certain plans can even become events that you can have on a weekly or monthly basis.

9) Emphasise the smaller details:

Starting a conversation with someone after wishing them for their birthday or any other event of theirs, like a big win, can go a long way in making a deeper connection with them.

10) Listen:

Listening to the person speaking to you and then bringing up what they spoke about immediately after or even after some time, can show the person that you care for them. Some ways to improve your listening skills include maintaining eye contact, asking question and summarising what they said to you

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