

Exploring Wellbeing

Session 5 People: *connect*



Social evolution

We evolved in tribes of 50 to 250, and in days gone by exclusion from the group significantly reduced our chances of survival. Evolution has **hardwired** us to need social connections, and according to one of the world's longest **studies** into happiness and health, this is still true today. Robert Waldinger, the current study director and professor at Harvard University says

“the surprising finding is that our relationships and how happy we are in our relationships has a powerful influence over our health.”

Connecting while social distancing

So, what does that mean, as we all do our bit to flatten the COVID-19 curve by ‘social distancing’? Some of us may be home alone and feeling isolated, while others are struggling to get used to spending so much time with partners, children or flatmates. Whichever it is, social isolation does not need to mean that we are lonely or disconnected, but it probably



does mean that we have to work a little harder to connect.

The quality and strength of our relationships are directly linked to the amount of time that we invest in them. Relationships are a bit like bank accounts, we need to make regular deposits, in this case through positive interactions.

“As a society and as individuals, we must urgently prioritise investing in building and maintaining good relationships and tackling barriers to forming them. Failing to do so is equivalent to turning a blind eye to the impact of smoking and obesity on our health and wellbeing Mental Health Foundation





Successful connections: the magic number

According to [Dr. John Gottman](#), the [ratio](#) of positive to negative interactions in a relationship should be five to one. Yes, that's right 5:1, so it's time to start seriously investing in our nearest and dearest!

Certainly, social isolation can make us feel lonelier, but it also has the potential to strengthen our connections as COVID-19 helps bring into focus what, and who, is really important in our lives.



Watch this really cool [YouTube clip](#) shows the power of appreciating your connections, but a warning, it will bring a tear to your eye.

Your challenge! Make time to invest in your relationships - they are the cornerstone of your wellbeing.

Take your pick from these great activities over the next week to help you build stronger relationships and connections. Dare you...!

1. Reconnect to connect: call someone you haven't spoken to for a long time and check in on how they are.
2. Take inspiration from the video and write a gratitude letter. to someone who has had a big influence on you explaining why and then read it to them.
3. Your Choice

Want to learn more? Check these websites out



Exploring Wellbeing

Session 5 People: *connect*



[Australian Red Cross](#)

Brilliant ideas to stay connected with elderly family and friends.



[Relationships Australia](#)

For great tips on how to survive self-isolation with your family.



[Raisingchildren.net.au](#)

Expert advice and practical tips for parents dealing with family during COVID-19.



[The Gottman Institute](#)

