The Power of Social Connections
Reconnecting Post-Pandemic

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Objectives

Learn about the science and theory behind social connectedness

Develop strategies on connecting with each other

Experiential activities
Let’s practice:
Narrative Therapy

Guidelines:

Do not include your name
Answer as honestly as you are comfortable
Responses will be randomly selected and read aloud

“If you really knew me, you would know…”

“Some of the things that have become most important to me following the pandemic are…”
Science and Theory of Social Connection

- Yalom’s stages of group cohesion
- Attachment theory
Yalom’s Stages of Group Cohesion

1. Forming/Orientation phase
2. Storming/Transition phase
3. Norming/Cohesiveness phase
4. Working/Performing phase
5. Adjourning/Termination phase
Attachment Theory

• An evolutionary theory of relationships that emphasizes the interactions between a human and their primary caregivers at the beginning of life.
  - We develop an attachment pattern that shapes future relationship patterns.
  - Attachment is triggered when we are faced with stress, separation, illness, trauma etc.

• Strange situation studies (Ainsworth, 1970s)

• Categorizations of attachment
  - Initially identified four attachment styles
  - Secure vs. Insecure
  - Avoidant and Anxious

• Relationship characteristics (R & J)
Physiological Explanations For Health Benefits of Social Ties

Social support
- Reducing the impact of stress
- May reduce BP, HR, stress hormones

Personal control
- Enhance belief that they can control their lives.

Mental Health
- In concert with everything else

Barriers to Building Positive Relationships

- Technology
- Lack of self-confidence
- Lack of interpersonal skills
- Reluctance to interact with others
- Poor communication skills
- Fear of change
- Their surroundings
Loneliness vs Social Isolation

**Loneliness**
- Subjective mental state
- Inability to connect or communicate with others
- Emotional, physical, and social factors contribute

**Social Isolation**
- Physical state
- Voluntary or involuntary absence of having contact with other individuals
- Alone, but not enjoying it
What is the most important relationship you have?

For more reading join our book club: Next meeting August 13, 2021 at 12 PM
5 Strategies: Fostering respect and encouraging quality connections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1) Conveying presence</th>
<th>Being present, mindful, paying attention</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2) Being genuine</td>
<td>Speaking and reacting honestly (no fronts)</td>
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<td>3) Communicating affirmations</td>
<td>Searching for the positive core in another</td>
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<td>4) Effective listening</td>
<td>Empathic and active, focus on speaker’s agenda</td>
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<tr>
<td>5) Supportive communication</td>
<td>Nonjudgmental, making requests, providing direction and guidance not criticism and threats</td>
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Enhancing Social Connection in your Personal Life

- Accept other individuals as they are
- Have an uplifting attitude
- Get a roommate or pet
- Volunteer
- Develop quality relationships
- Expect the best from themselves and others
- Identify reasons why you feel lonely
- Be aware that loneliness is a signal that something needs to change
- Use counseling or therapy to build relational skills
What is Mindful Listening?

• Being fully present
• Not being in a rush
• Avoiding inserting ourselves
Why practice Mindful Listening?

• Makes the other person feel heard, valued, and safe
• Enhances patience and concentration
• Allows you to gather crucial information that you might have otherwise missed
Let’s practice!
Mindful Listening Exercise

Find a partner, someone you have not spoken to before

Pick who will start as the speaker and who will start as the listener
Talk about someone you care about
(90 sec)
This is NOT a performance!
Listener

• Do not speak

• Surrender the need to ask questions, give advice, fix problems, or make the person feel good

• Simple eye contact is enough

• RELAX your body, focus on your breathing

• This is NOT a performance!
Speaker

Talk about someone you are worried about
(90 sec)
This is NOT a performance!
Listener

Remember, no need to say anything
Take a breath, relax, and be present
This is NOT a performance!
What was that like?
Patient, Interrupted

- Average interruption time in a primary care visit is 12-18 seconds
- Only 23% of patients are permitted to complete their opening statement of concerns
- Female physicians interrupt patients less often than male physicians
- Both female and male physicians interrupt female patients more often than male patients


Questions, Reflections, and Discussion

• What did you experience in terms of changes to social connection during the pandemic?
• What would help you feel connected to your class?
• Are there changes you want to make in terms of how you connect to others?