



Other People Matter: Strengthening The Foundation of Happiness



Key Takeaways

- Chris Peterson, one of the founders of the field of positive psychology, said he could sum up positive psychology in 3 words: "other people matter."
- The Harvard Study of Adult Development, started in 1938 and now in its 4th director, is one of the longest studies of humans in history. Key findings include:
 - Social connections keep us healthier and happier
 - The single biggest predictor of our happiness is the quality of our relationships
 - Good relationships don't just protect our bodies, they protect our minds and lead to later memory decline
- "Loneliness kills. It's as powerful as smoking or alcoholism." – Robert Waldinger
- Blue Zones are areas around the world where people live longer than average. These areas further demonstrate that meaningful social relationships benefit the quality and the length of human life.
- We are wired to be in connection, to belong and to work towards something greater than ourselves.
- We are social creatures that evolved from communal/tribal societies. We hunted together, fought off enemies together and raised children together.
- According to the 2020 Cigna Loneliness Index, 3 in 5 American adults report feeling lonely.
- Loneliness is felt in the same center of our brain as pain, likely an adaptive mechanism to keep us in connection.
- Oxytocin, known as the "cuddle hormone," is a neuropeptide we produce when we are in connection. It makes us feel safe, promotes compassion and elicits the 'calm-and-connect' response.
- Social connection buffers the stress response which can adversely affect coronary arteries, gut function, insulin regulation and the immune system.


- What influences a quality connection:
 - Experiencing positive emotions together
 - Being able to talk openly and feeling understood
 - Giving and receiving of support
 - Shared activities and experiences
- 3 strategies for strengthening relationships include:
 - Active constructive responding
 - Building trust
 - Understanding the role of emotional contagion
- Active Constructive responding is a response style that can deepen connection when someone shares good news. The hallmarks are active listening and engaged responding with enthusiastic and authentic support.

	Active	Passive
Constructive	Enthusiastic support Eye Contact Authentic Great news! I knew you'd do it. How do you feel? 	Low Energy Delayed Response Quiet Oh cool, that's nice...good for you. 
Destructive	Quashing the event! Dismissive Demeaning I don't believe you! It sounds stressful. 	Turns focus inward Avoiding Ignore Speaker Huh, Well, I just got a new video game. 

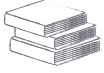
- The trust equation can be used to deepen trust within a relationship.

$$\text{Trustworthiness (T)} = \frac{\text{Credibility (C)} + \text{Reliability (R)} + \text{Intimacy (I)}}{\text{Self-Orientation (S)}}$$

- Emotional contagion is the tendency to catch and feel the emotion of others. It is not just our 1st degree connections that influence our happiness levels but also our 2nd and 3rd degree connections. We want to both be the energy we want to attract and surround ourselves with others that feel the way we wish to feel.

 Putting it into Practice

- Over the next month, focus on strengthening your relationships.
 - See what relationships might need attending to
 - Practice active constructive responding to deepen your connections
 - Work on strengthening trust with the elements of the trust equation
 - Keep emotional contagion in mind, both on the giving and receiving end



Suggested Reading & Additional Resources

- Books:

"Big Potential," Shawn Achor

"Love 2.0," Barabara Fredrickson

"Happy Together," Susan Pileggi Pawelski and James Pawelski

- Websites:

More about Blue Zones: <https://www.bluezones.com/>

Deeper dive into Harvard Adult Development Study: <https://www.adultdevelopmentstudy.org/>

Northbound: <http://www.headnorthbound.com/>

- TED Talk:

- Rober Waldinger, "What Makes a Good Life"

- Social:

I share positive psych tips, tools, resources & theory at:



headnorthbound



head_northbound



Aha!



Commitment

- Join us for session 7, "**Working with Worry: Strategies to Ease Your Mind.**"

Zoom - March 17th, 12pm ET