

The Neuroscience of Connection

Practical Tips to Enhance any Relationship
John Howard, MA, LPC, LMFT

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION AFTER THE LAKE
IF YOU'RE SERIOUS ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP, YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS THIS!

Relationship science has exploded in the last 15 years. fMRI and PET scan studies along with additional advances in neuroscience and psychology have given us a much better understanding of how to create and deepen connection in close relationships. Below is an outline of what I'll be discussing on Sunday. I plan to give you some practical tips from the new science that you can implement to see results in your relationship right away. Come to the talk to get all the info! (Or use my presenter's notes at the web page below to get a more in-depth outline). **See you there! –John**

Relationships Matter

In *The Five Invitations: Discovering What Death can teach us About Living Fully*, Buddhist teacher Frank Ostaseski writes that when people are asked at the end of life what mattered most, they typically say it was the quality of the relationships they were able to form. According to Frank, people focus on two questions: "Am I loved?" and "Did I love well?" How would you answer those questions honestly today? How would you like to be able to you answer them?

If you're not in a primary romantic relationship, keep in mind that we're all in important relationships by default. Some people focus on the question of: "Should I be in a primary partner relationship?" But a better question is: "Do you want more love, connection and intimacy in your life?" If the answer is yes, you have a chance to start with the relationships you have, which is one of the best ways to prepare for a healthy partner relationship.

What the Research Says

A 2018 study by healthcare company, Cigna, concluded that over half of Americans feel lonely, isolated, and lacking support. Fifty-four percent of those surveyed said they felt no one actually knows them well and 40% said they "lack companionship," their "relationships

aren't meaningful," and they feel "isolated from others." Generations Y (millennials) and Z were identified as the most disconnected—ironic considering all the technology that exists to connect us.

A 2010 study conducted by AARP found that over 42 million Americans over the age of 45 were found to be suffering from chronic loneliness, including those in partner relationships. Research on loneliness presented at the 2017 Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association found that greater social connection is associated with a 50% reduced risk of premature death. The quality of our connections is a primary determinant of our risk for premature heart disease and may even be more important in that regard than obesity. In 2016, the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences published research showing that the quality of our relationships is equal to exercise and nutrition in determining our health and longevity. It found that adults are more likely to develop hypertension from disconnection than from diabetes, and that increased social strain increases the odds of inflammation and obesity.

Outline for Sunday's Presentation

1. Relationship is built on connection (not communication)
 - a. We're all taught communication skills, but we're not taught connection skills, especially the ones from neuroscience. Connection is more valuable to relationship health than communication
 - b. Connection is determined by simpler, more primitive parts of the nervous system built to gauge a sense of safety. Learn how to speak 'nervous system' and watch your connection score go up!
 - c. The evolutionary purpose of relationship is to achieve a sense of greater safety and security, which is measured by more primitive parts of the brain and nervous system. These are the parts that primarily determine how connected we feel to others.
2. You don't need a lot of time to create a strong connection with your partner. The language of connection creates a strong bond fast

- a. What is the language of the nervous system that creates connection? I will describe 5 key communicators of connection the brain pays close attention to:
 - i. Proximity
 - ii. Touch
 - iii. Tone
 - iv. Eye Contact
 - v. Speed
 - vi. There are others, like body language, timing, and simple phrases spoken directly from the heart
 - b. One master tip that will change your relationship starting today—say one meaningful, simple phrase directly from your heart once a day to your partner into their eyes and watch depth and love increase
 - c. Learn the power of implementing Dr. Tatkin’s Welcome Home exercise
3. Relationship growth is about practice more than knowledge, and the best practice is done together with your partner.
- a. Relationships utilize a lot of automatic circuits—habitual wiring from childhood and our original family culture. We need to remap some of those circuits and the motor memory that goes along with them to see our native habits improve. I’ll be discussing how to do that.
 - b. Sports analogies. Learn how boxing training, soccer practice, playing football, or playing the piano are useful metaphors to understand how to train to make our relationships better
 - c. Interactions happen fast and utilize automatic circuitry. We can train those fast, underlying circuits with the right training to make our motor memory actions and reactions more secure.
 - d. I’ve put some resources for you at www.ReadySetLove.com/GoBundance. You can get my presenters notes from the talk in case you were unable to attend, plus links to my audio course and the 12-week Ready Set Love® online program you can do with your partner. It’s FUN! And gets you and your partner working together to learn better skills! I may even be offering a

special Q&A for the GoBundance tribe, so make sure to sign up through the link be!

The Ready Set Love 12-week online program gives you and your partner a cutting-edge education in the science of connection and exercises that develop important relationship skills. Sign up at www.ReadySetLove.com/GoBundance-Partner-Program to be eligible for the bonus Q&A session that the tribe might set up with John.

The 6-session Audio Course is great for your own learning at the gym or on the go. Learn more about the science of connection and practical tips you can implement in your relationship. Purchase the course [right here](#).

It was a real pleasure to get to know you at the event! Don't hesitate to call my office or email me with questions about relationship life or our programs. See you soon!

- *John*

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