Science and Spirituality—Our Foundational Need to Belong

#OtheringandBelonging
SCIENCE, SPIRITUALITY, JUSTICE, HEALING

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We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.

-Albert Einstein
Ubuntu

“A person is a person through other people.”

“I am because we are.”

- Archbishop Desmond Tutu
THERE IS NO “AWAY”
Justice as Collective Repair & Healing

Crime is a violation of people and relationships

Those violations create obligations

The central obligation is to do right by those you’ve harmed

- Prof. Howard Zehr
“Coming together to understand and to talk things through, so everyone can move forward in a good way.”

- Hon. Robert Yazzie, Chief Justice Emeritus Navajo Nation Supreme Court
“Whatever effects one directly effects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality.”

- Dr. MLK, Jr.
“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting our time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

- LILLA WATSON
EFFECTIVENESS OF CONNECTEDNESS

91% would participate in another RCC

91% would recommend the process to a friend

44% recidivism reduction

$7,000 vs $150,000 Cost Savings

Responsible Youth

Survivor Participants
Indra’s Net
THANK YOU.

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Emiliana Simon-Thomas, Ph.D.
The Greater Good Science Center, UC Berkeley
Lack of Belonging is Harmful to Health

“Social relationships, or the relative lack thereof, constitute a major risk factor for health—rivaling the effect of well established health risk factors such as cigarette smoking, blood pressure, blood lipids, obesity and physical activity”

—House, Landis, and Umberson; Science 1988 [1]

(Holt-Lunstad et. al, 2010)
We Look to Friends for Support

“The human brain expects access to social relationships that mitigate risk and diminish the level of effort needed to meet a variety of goals...”

(Coan & Sbarra, 2015)

Fig. 3. Mean slant estimates as a function of being alone or with friend, Study 1. The horizontal line represents the actual slant of the hill (26°).

(Shnall, 2008)
We’re Built to Connect
Humans fall into rhythm with one another, from gestures down to heart rate.

(Feldman et. al. 2016)
We’re Built to Connect

The Face

The Voice

Touch

We have multiple systems for forming meaningful, long term bonds.
We’re Built to Connect

It’s our first impulse to share, and it takes more effort to be selfish.

(Rand & Greene 2012)
We’re Built to Connect

The brain helps us connect.

(McCreary, 2018)

Figure 1. Diagram of brain and areas involved in empathy
We Connect With: Gratitude

“The ‘find, remind, and bind’ emotion, for forming, strengthening, and maintaining social connections.”

(Algoe, 2012)
We Connect With: Awe

- Small Self
- Vastness
- Pro-social Action
- Modest Behavior
- Sacrifice for Group

(Dacher Keltner)
We Connect With: Generosity

Prosocial Spending Predicting Well-Being

(Aknin 2013, 2015)
Barriers to Connection

• Materialistic, self-sufficient, and individualistic cultural norms
• Inequality, social hierarchy, and power distance
• In-group/out-group pejorative beliefs/competition
• Cynicism (e.g. there’s no value in connecting)
• Lack of bandwidth (e.g. “time famine”, too busy to connect)
Advantages to Connection

• Secure attachment is tied to lower vulnerability physical and mental illness and disease.

• Social isolation registers like physical pain, and loneliness is tied to hyper inflammation, cardiovascular risk, and earlier death.

• Participation in values-based, socially supportive community activities (e.g. spiritual/religious groups) is tied to human flourishing.

• A 10% increase in “having someone to count on” is equivalent to doubling per capita GDP.
Connection Practice

Pair up with a partner in the room, preferably someone unfamiliar

1. Together, for 2 minutes, create a list, as long as you can (at least 25), of things that you have in common with one another
2. Try to discover unusual or unexpected commonalities

For example: favorites, dislikes, memorable experiences, fears, childhood ambitions, skills and hobbies, goals...
“If I wanted to predict your happiness, and I could know only one thing about you, I wouldn’t want to know your gender, religion, health, or income. I’d want to know about your social network – about your friends and family and the strength of the bonds with them.”

(Dan Gilbert)
FREE Resources

Web links
1. greatergood.berkeley.edu
2. ggsc.berkeley.edu
3. ggia.berkeley.edu
4. thnx4.org
5. The Science of Happiness podcast (@ iTunes)

Online Courses on edX.org:
1. The Science of Happiness
2. Foundations of Happiness at Work
3. Mindfulness and Resilience to Stress at Work
4. Empathy and EQ at Work