

Six Ways We Cause Disconnection

We all want to feel loved, connected, met, and supported. In fact, it is a fundamental life-long need we all have as social beings. But getting to that place with people that matter to you can be a vulnerable and even scary process. (Some of us are even scared to do this with ourselves!) When we have wounds, or are simply too scared, we find ways to avoid those moments where contact and connection can happen. When we avoid those moments, we are left feeling disconnected.

Below are six main ways we disconnect: (Turn page over to find out how to reconnect)

Deflection: Best known as distraction. When we deflect, we are basically saying, "Hey! Look over here! Now Look over here! Now look over here!" This can look like changing the subject, joking/laughing/smiling when sharing something that's not funny, reporting or just talking about vs. embodied sharing with feeling, etc. The goal is to have the other person look anywhere but at the real us.

Retroflection: Doing to yourself, what you really need to do out in/to the world. The most obvious form of retroflection is self-harmful behavior, also known as self-mutilation or cutting. Retroflection is not limited to teens or extreme behavior though, it can simply be negative self-talk, self-soothing behaviors, biting nails, etc.

Projection: The simplest translation is assuming someone else's experience. When we take our own experiences, emotions, reactions, thoughts, rules, ideals, values, taboo's, etc. and we put it onto someone else. (e.g: I felt mad when my boyfriend broke up with me....and now you're telling me your boyfriend broke up with you so you *must* feel mad!)

Confluence: Also known as enmeshment, or emotional fusion, it's when we 'lose ourselves' in someone else. (their story, their emotion, their agenda) This often shows up when we really want to empathize but it's too difficult to stay in our own experience, so we join the other's experience totally. Co-dependence is born here.

Introjection: Swallowing a message or rule whole --often from parents, culture, organizations or authority-- without checking to see if it is true for us. (This is the basis of all suffering in my opinion.) We don't stay in relationship with ourselves enough to check out if what's being dished to us really fits for us. Family structure, social rules, and organizational beliefs can all be rooted in introjects. Rebellion is a direct attempt to differentiate from whatever has been introjected.

Proflection: Can be viewed as a combination of projection and retroflection. Doing to others what we really want for our ourselves (but don't know how to ask for). This can look like touching/hugging others a lot because you really want touch/hugs, buying a gift for someone that you really would want for yourself, extending unconditional love to another but not being able to offer it to yourself.

It is important to note that there are many more ways we can lose contact with ourselves and others, and that these ways arise all the time. The thing to remember is that there are just as many ways to regain contact and connection. (See reverse)

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Art of Contact

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The Art of Contact:

Six Ways to Reconnect With Yourself and Others

The reverse side of this page tells you how disconnection most often occurs. Once you gain awareness of the ways in which you disconnect from yourself and others, you will find that reconnecting can feel like an art! The good news is, art is all about creativity, and there are truly an infinite number of ways you can create connection!

Below are six ways you can start practicing right now to reconnect with yourself and others:

Breathe: Just breathe. The breath is our gateway to experience. Right Now, take a full inhale and a full exhale. Now do that two more times....what do you notice? (Do you feel your body more? Are you in your head?...)

Get Present: (Easier said than done for most!) Be right here, right now. Nothing more. Now do it again, be right here, right now. Notice what is right here and now. Sounds. Feelings. Visual surroundings. Smells. Physical experience. Etc. Try not to judge positively or negatively, but just simply notice...

Practice Embodiment: Be aware of your physical, emotional, and energetic body. Just touch-base for a snapshot if that's all you can do, but if you can 'stay' for more, notice where your tight, where your holding, and where you feel open and relaxed. Be aware if those places hold more information for you (hint: yes!)

Cultivate Compassion: The Dali Lama once said, "If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion." In practicing compassion it is helpful to remember that at the root of it all, we are all just human beings. We need food, and shelter, and love. We crave attention, and recognition, and affection, and, happiness. We all have fear, hurt, vulnerability, and shame. We have all known joy, sorrow, anger, and fear. Breathe into your heart. Practice empathy and love. If you can't with your peers, try starting this practice with a young child.

Share One Thing: See if you can allow yourself to share one thing. State the obvious if that's all you can muster, just be real: "Wow, I feel really shy right now" or, "I'm scared to share something about myself" or, "You look really sad"

You can only be in contact and connected with your loved ones as much as you personally know how to be in contact. The above six practices --with the intention of connecting and getting real-- will help you deepen your relationships with yourself and others. Contact, really is art, so let your creative (heart) juices flow!

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Alyson Lanier has been in the mental health and human services field since 1996. Alyson received her BA and MA in psychology. Alyson enjoys her private practice educating and coaching individuals, providing individual sessions, and therapeutic intensives. She continues to collaborate with Authentic World and The Consciously Parenting Project, providing weekend workshops, family game days, educational courses, and transformative intensives for the greater good.

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