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DO YOU HAVE LOST CONNECTIONS?

This month we look at 'why' depression and anxiety occur, and what you can do to help yourself. This newsletter is written with the help of a great book, *Lost Connections*, by Johann Hari. Read on to find out more.

Click [here](#) to read last month's newsletter, about how loneliness impacts mental health and what you can do to help yourself, and to access all our previous articles.

You and Your Brain Are Not Broken

By Amanda Pulford
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The rate of depression and anxiety continue to rise, with one in four individuals experiencing mental unwellness. Why? Johann Hari, the author of *Lost Connections*, travels around the world to find this 'why'. His book summarises thousands of hours of work, speaking to hundreds of people around the world, and looks at nine different causes. Some of these causes are in our biology; however most are in the way we are living today. And the great news is, we can influence these nine different causes to live a life free of depression and anxiety.

The following information is taken from Johann's research.

If you're interested in our previous articles, please click [here](#)

If you've got a suggestion for an article, or there's something more you would like to hear about, please send us an email - click [here](#)

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Depression and anxiety have long been thought of as afflictions of the brain – that something is wrong with our brains – or that our brain is broken. Johann’s research dispels this, and offers other reasons for ‘why’ depression and anxiety are significantly increasing in our society.

Disconnection from Meaningful Work

You might think that having too much responsibility is what creates stress and contributes to poor mental health. However, numerous studies from tax office workers to mental health units have found that a lack of purpose, a lack of control and a lack of balance between efforts and rewards contribute to poor mental health. *“Work [that] is monotonous, boring, soul-destroying; [where] they die a little when they come to work each day, because their work touches no part of them that is them. Disempowerment is at the heart of poor health” – physical, mental, and emotional.*

... Other People

Sadly, we’re living in the most non-tribe era of our time. And while we have access to digital connection at anytime and anywhere in the world, would it surprise you to know that loneliness is at an all time high? *“The kind of connection we need is ... face-to-face, where we are able to see, and touch, and smell, and hear each other ... We’re social creatures. We’re meant to be in connection with one another in a safe, caring way ...”*

... Meaningful Values

Do you know what your values are? Just a hint, values are the things that you believe are important in the way you live and work. They *should* determine your priorities. When the things that you do and the way you behave match your values, life is usually good – you’re satisfied and content. But when these don’t align with your personal values, that’s when things feel wrong. In this day and age, we often prioritise ‘material

things’ over those things that mean the most to us. Shopping over quality time, a new car over being financially free, or working too many hours over giving back. *“The first thing is for people to ask themselves – Am I setting up my life so I can have a chance of succeeding at my values? Am I hanging out with the right people, who are going to make me feel loved, as opposed to making me feel like I made it?”*

... Childhood Trauma

Study after study is confirming what we have known for a long time, childhood trauma is damaging psychologically (also physically too), and that this damage can last a lifetime (if it’s not processed). Unfortunately, individuals who have experienced trauma in childhood often blame themselves for what happened at the time, or how they are now. This is really damaging. *“When people have these kinds of problems, it’s time to stop asking what’s wrong with them, and time to start asking what happened to them”.*

... Status and Respect

When you have a society with huge gaps in income and status, research tell us that it creates the sense that some people seem supremely important, and other seem of no importance at all. In a highly unequal society, everyone has to think about their status a lot. *“We can find practical ways to dismantle hierarchies and create a more equal place, where everybody feels they have a measure of respect and status. Or we can build up hierarchies and ramp up the humiliation – as we are doing today.”*

... the Natural World

Natural landscapes can help us feel that us and our concerns are very small, and the world is very big, whereas depression and anxiety can trap us in our own story, feeling like everything is about us. Further, research demonstrates that being in captivity induces depression and depression-like

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symptoms. *“I think we have many modern forms of captivity. We want to feel alive, we want it, and need it, so badly.”*

... a Hopeful or Secure Future

Many studies have concluded that a sense of a positive future protects you. If life is bad today, you can think – this hurts, but it won't hurt forever. But when it is taken away, it can feel like your pain will never go away. *“When you have a stable picture of yourself in the future, what it gives you is perspective. You are able to say ‘Okay, I’m having a shitty day. But I’m not having a shitty life.’”*

... the Real Role of Genes and Brain Changes

The story (“Your brain is broken” “You don't have enough Serotonin”) tells us our distress has no meaning – it's just defective tissue. We feel disempowered, feeling we're not good enough – because our brain's not good enough. It also pitches us against parts of ourselves – on one side there are feelings of distress, caused by the malfunction in our brain or genes, on the other side there's the sane part. *“The old story says our distress is fundamentally irrational, caused by faulty apparatus in our head. The new story says our distress is – however painful – in fact rational, and sane.”*

What Can You Do? Reconnect!

To Other People : Be connected with everyone around you. Be part of the whole. Be truly present with the people you love – don't be lost in a haze of distractions.

Social Prescribing : Connect to the people around you, it's restoring of human nature.

Meaningful Work : Find a way to positively impact another human.

Meaningful Values : Come together with other people, think deeply, and reconnect with what really matters, then we can begin to dig a tunnel back to meaningful values.

Sympathetic Joy, and Overcoming Addiction to Self : Foster a healthy

relationship with your ego, and find compassion and connection with yourself and others.

Acknowledging and Overcoming Childhood

Trauma : Reconnect to your childhood trauma, and see the trauma from an observer's perspective, this can help to set you free from its negative effects.

Restoring the Future : You're a human being. You only live once. What do you really want to do with it?

The Take Away

You need your pain. It is a message, and we must listen to the message. The message is that something has gone wrong with the way we live. We need to stop trying to muffle or silence or pathologise the pain. Instead, we need to listen to it, and honour it. It is only when we listen to our pain that we can follow it back to its source – and only there, when we can see its true causes, can we begin to overcome it.

Talks

The Rising Depression and Anxiety Crisis

by Johann Hari

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6OAML_R38-AI

Hari discovered that, in reality, depression and anxiety are caused largely by crucial changes in the way we are living. Using vivid human stories and social science, he explains the evidence.

The Value of Human Connection

by Kim Gemmell

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTt_qLlIkos

Fulfillment in life isn't about objects or possessions; true fulfillment is about our relationships and communication with each other.

Get Back To Nature For Good Mental

Health by Caroline Arnold

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5k84CB0k88>

Caroline presents the evidence on why our disconnection with nature is resulting in us being 'fish out of water' and shares the benefits of being outdoors and immersed in the natural world.

Website

Lost Connections

<https://thelostconnections.com/>

Across the world, Hari discovered social scientists who were uncovering the real causes of depression and anxiety and they are mostly not in our brains, but in the way we live today. Hari's journey took him from a life-threatening experience in Vietnam, to an Amish community in Indiana, to an uprising in Berlin.

Books



Lost Connections by Johann Hari

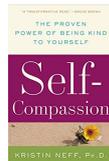
Hari suffered from depression since he was a child and started taking anti-depressants when he was a teenager. He was told like his entire generation that his problem was caused by a chemical imbalance in his brain. As an adult he began to investigate this question and he learned that almost everything we have been told about depression and anxiety is wrong.



First, We Make The Beast Beautiful by Sarah Wilson

Wilson has suffered from bipolar disorder, eating disorders, manic episodes, and intermittent depression. But the anxiety has always been there, and she's somehow

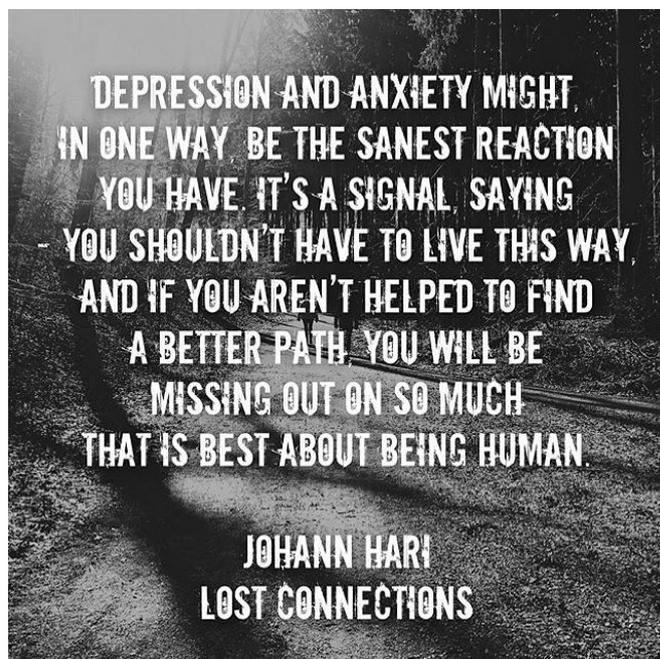
leveraged it to get her places. The heart of First, We Make the Beast Beautiful is that they key to anxiety is not getting rid of it but merely directing it in more productive ways.



Self-Compassion by Kristin Neff

Self-compassion is the answer to every time you've ever heard someone say, "hey, don't be so hard on yourself," without any explanation of how to not be so hard on yourself. Neff has not only proposed this as a more effective measurement of psychological health than self-esteem but she's also done research into how we get there.

As always, if you would like some help, please feel free to contact us on 0488 954 195, admin@awakenpsychology.com.au or [click here](#)



If at any stage, you find you need urgent assistance – go to your closest **Emergency Department**, call the **Mental Health Emergency Line** on 13 14 65, or call **Lifeline** on 13 11 14.

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