Social Connections, a Primer; Putting the Pieces Together

This Mental Health Week, let us say more than just “I’m fine.” Let’s have real conversations with our friends, neighbours and coworkers about how we’re all really doing. We’re in this together.

Who Needs to Connect? EVERYONE needs to connect. Human beings are social creatures. Human beings as far back as history can take us shows that we are tribal. We need to be a part of social groups. Social groups us with an important part of our identity, and more than that, they teach us a set of skills that help us to live our lives. Even small babies experience health related issues if they are not cuddled.

What do we mean by Social Connection? Social connection is the experience of feeling close and connected to others. It involves feeling loved, cared for, and valued, and forms the basis of interpersonal relationships. “Connection is the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard and valued; when they can give and receive without judgement. Source: Wikipedia

During this period of social distancing related to COVID-19 we can feel disconnected. Family, friends, clients, workmates, neighbours, even in some cases our pets are included in the feeling of being disconnected. One of the greatest challenges of working from home is feeling connected to the workplace. Remember having a conversation with a co-worker, in person? Remember popping out if your office to run to a meeting, in person? Some telecommuters have reported small cases of cabin fever; after weeks of work isolation and nothing but email correspondence, having a real conversation with anyone even that annoying co-worker - sounds good.

Why are Social Connections so Important? Here’s a list of benefits:
• Disease prevention
• Fewer physical health problems
• Longevity/length of life
• Improved cognitive function
• Better self-esteem
• Sense of belonging
• Maintained purpose of life

When should we Socially Connect? Frequently! However, this does not mean that you bombard your connections with everything going on in your life at every minute of the day. Real social support through connection can be enhanced when people build their skills to communicate well, and to empathize with one another. This is particularly important if you need to share your feelings with a trusted friend. This Mental Health Week, let’s say more than just “I’m fine.” Let’s have real conversations with our friends, neighbours and coworkers about how we’re all really doing. We’re in this together.

How to Connect: Phone calls, video calls and other digital technologies offer excellent opportunities for connecting face-to-face, even when we can’t be in the same room. The pandemic can bring us together in unexpected ways. Canada has been at the forefront of a campaign for care mongering, which has seen members of the community helping one another during these difficult times. Social connection can help us recover as a community. Socially connected communities simply respond better to crisis and disaster, and rebound better afterwards. Source: (Aldrich, 2017; Banwell & Kingham 2015; Carpenter, 2013.)

Click on the links beside each puzzle piece for a video with more information. It looks like we have put the pieces together. Be safe and stay well.