

FEELING CONNECTED

Difficulty: **CASUAL** | Frequency: **VARIABLE** | Duration: **5 MINS**

WHY YOU SHOULD TRY IT

Humans have a strong drive to be kind, but that drive is usually stronger when they feel connected to other people. To help foster that feeling of closeness, this exercise asks you to think about a time when you felt a strong connection to another person and to describe the experience in writing. Research suggests that reflecting on feelings of connection can increase people's motivation to help others, whether by helping a friend or stranger in need, volunteering, or donating money. Helping others can, in turn, increase happiness and improve relationships.

TIME REQUIRED

10 minutes. Try to do this practice at least once per week, selecting a different example each time

HOW TO DO IT

1. Try to think of a time when you felt a strong bond with someone in your life. Choose a specific example of an experience you had with this person when you felt especially close and connected to them. This could be a time you had a meaningful conversation, gave or received support, experienced a great loss or success together, or witnessed a historic moment together.
2. Once you've thought of a specific example, write a short paragraph about what happened. In particular, consider the ways in which this experience made you feel close and connected to the other person.

EVIDENCE IT THAT WORKS

Pavey, L., Greitemeyer, T., & Sparks, P. (2011). [Highlighting relatedness promotes prosocial motives and behavior](#). *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37(7), 905-917.

Some study participants reflected on a time when they felt a strong bond with someone else; other participants wrote about a time when they felt especially competent or autonomous. Compared with those in the other groups, the participants who reflected on their experience of closeness reported greater feelings of connectedness and concern for others. What's more, they also reported a stronger intention to carry out a variety of altruistic behaviors over the next six weeks, including giving money to charity and going out of their way to help a stranger in need.

When they analyzed the data more closely, the researchers found that a greater desire to be kind depended on whether participants experienced greater feelings of connectedness to others after doing the writing exercise.

WHY TO TRY IT

Feeling connected to others is considered to be a fundamental psychological need. When people feel rejected or alone, they may be more likely to focus on themselves and on striving to meet their own unmet needs, rather than attending to the needs of others. When people feel connected and cared about, by contrast, they are better able to expend energy on helping and caring for others.

By reflecting on times when you've felt a strong connection with others, and by striving to cultivate more of these experiences, you are fueling your drive to practice kindness and compassion.

This practice is part of [Greater Good in Action](#), a clearinghouse of the best research-tested methods for increasing happiness, resilience, kindness, and connection, created by the [Greater Good Science Center](#) at UC Berkeley and [HopeLab](#).

