

The Connection Crisis

Dr. Katie Andreasen

Connection is an essential impulse that is needed for survival. It keeps us in an **optimal brain state** that facilitates learning and problem solving.

People have an innate desire to connect with others, form bonds, care, be empathetic and choose cooperation. In fact, this need is so great that ostracization and rejection physically *hurt*. The brain areas activated by social pain overlap with those activated during physical pain. When children experience rejection, the pain system comes on and shuts down the higher centers of the brain.

When shut down, children are unable to make healthy choices. Without the ability to self-regulate, they end up in an aggressive state where they may hurt themselves or others. Children must be connected *before* they

can cooperate, learn and succeed.

According to the University of Exeter, the single most important predictor of health is the number of groups you belong to and the number of strong relationships you have. Practicing unity and connection is vital for our physical and emotional well-being.

The idea that we're all connected is not some mystical notion. It's science. We've all experienced this before: you feel someone looking at you, you sense the distress of a loved one, and you form instant connections with some individuals and not with others.

Humans emit electromagnetic waves that can be measured with devices like the electrocardiogram (EKG) and the electroencephalogram (EEG). The electromagnetic energy emitted by our brains can power a 10-watt light bulb.

Research at the [HeartMath Institute](#) shows that at a conversational distance, the electromagnetic signals generated by one person's heart can influence another person's brain rhythms. Another HeartMath study found that a mother's brainwaves can synchronize with her baby's heartbeat. Many groups are studying the energetic field that connects us all, including The University of Arizona, Princeton, the International Institute of Biophysics, Cambridge University, and the Institute of Noetic Sciences.

It's a fact that we are all affected by the thoughts and feelings of those around us. In addition, the quality of our relationships impacts how we perceive the world.

NEARLY 50 M

OR 19.86% OF AMERICAN ADULTS EXPERIENCED A MENTAL ILLNESS IN 2019.

4.58%

OF ADULTS REPORT HAVING SERIOUS THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE. THIS HAS INCREASED EVERY YEAR SINCE 2011-2012.

15.08%

OF YOUTH EXPERIENCED A MAJOR DEPRESSIVE EPISODE IN THE PAST YEAR.

24.7%

OF ADULTS WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS REPORT AN UNMET NEED FOR TREATMENT. THIS NUMBER HAS NOT DECLINED SINCE 2011.

OVER 60%

OF YOUTH WITH MAJOR DEPRESSION DO NOT RECEIVE ANY MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT.

EVEN IN STATES WITH THE GREATEST ACCESS, **NEARLY 1 IN 3**

ARE GOING WITHOUT TREATMENT.

MORE THAN HALF

OF ADULTS WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS DO NOT RECEIVE TREATMENT, TOTALING OVER 27 MILLION U.S. ADULTS.

10.6%

OR OVER 2.5 MILLION YOUTH IN THE U.S. HAVE SEVERE MAJOR DEPRESSION. THIS RATE WAS HIGHEST AMONG YOUTH WHO IDENTIFY AS MORE THAN ONE RACE, AT

EVEN AMONG YOUTH WITH SEVERE DEPRESSION WHO RECEIVE SOME TREATMENT,

ONLY 27%

RECEIVE CONSISTENT CARE. IN STATES WITH THE LEAST ACCESS, ONLY

11.1%

OF AMERICANS WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS ARE UNINSURED, THE SECOND YEAR IN A ROW THAT THIS INDICATOR INCREASED SINCE THE PASSAGE OF THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT (ACA).

14.5%

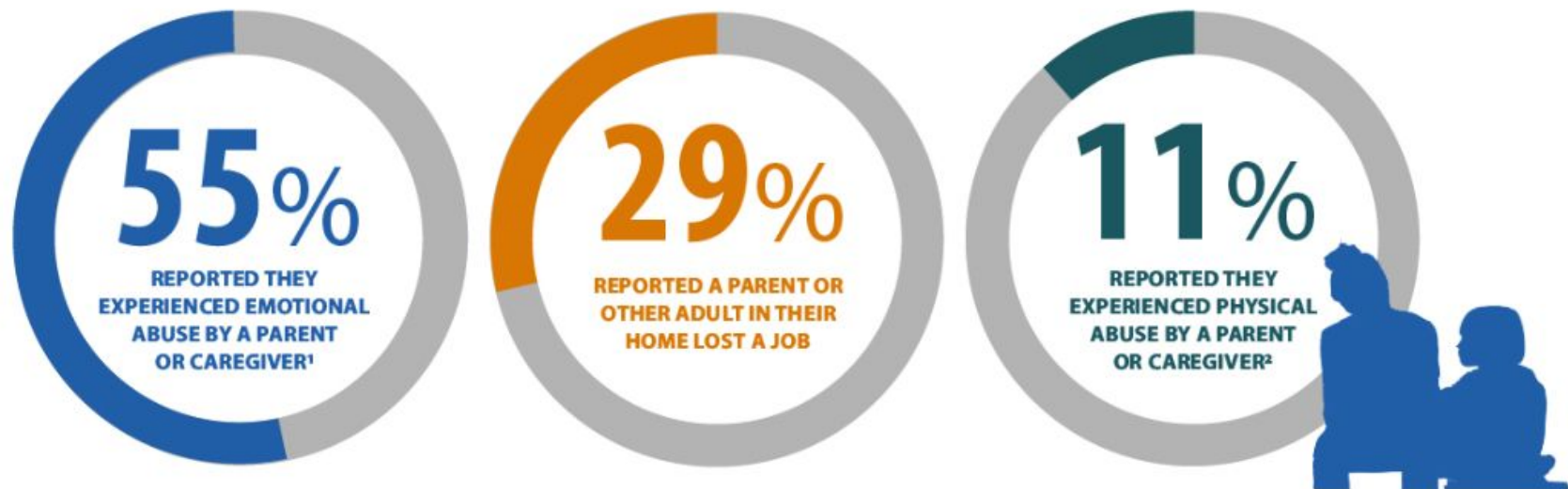
12%

RECEIVE CONSISTENT CARE.

8.1%

OF CHILDREN HAD PRIVATE INSURANCE THAT DID NOT COVER MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, TOTALING 950,000 YOUTH.

CDC DATA GIVE MORE INSIGHT INTO SEVERE CHALLENGES U.S. YOUTH HAVE ENCOUNTERED DURING COVID-19



¹ Parent or other adult in the home swearing at, insulting, or putting down the student

² Parent or other adult in the home hitting, beating, kicking or physically hurting the student

For more information, visit
cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

Connection Requires Four Critical Elements:

Eye Contact



Get down on the child's level to achieve **eye contact** for a brief moment. When eyes meet, a wireless connection is created between the orbital frontal areas of the prefrontal lobes. From this connection, we download inner states into one another. The eyes contain nerve projections that lead directly to key brain structures for empathy and matching emotions. As soon as you have eye contact, download calm, "There you are. You're safe. Breathe with me. You can handle this." "Mirror neurons ensure the moment someone sees an emotion on your face, they will at once sense the same feeling within themselves."
- Daniel Stern

Presence



Being present in the moment means your mind and body are in the same place. Your mind is free from chatter. You are still enough to see the beauty in the child. Presence is about acceptance as we join together to share the same moment. The present moment is where joy lies. Relax into it.

Touch



Touch is the only sense we cannot live without. The skin and brain are made up of the same embryonic tissue. The skin is the outside layer of the brain. Touch creates a hormone that is essential to neural functioning and learning. If we want smart, happy kids, then we need to provide more appropriate, caring touch.

Playfulness



Playfulness helps build bonds and creates a biochemistry in the brain for dopamine. Dopamine says, "Pay attention, stay focused." Playful situations strengthen the dopamine system, increase attention spans and boost social development.

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CARING CONNECTIONS: Strengthening Relationships by Practicing Kindness, Being Grateful, and Spending Quality Time With Those We LOVE

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>Do something helpful for a family member or friend.</p> 	<p>Connect with a relative to say hello and chat.</p> 	<p>Count your blessings: List the kind things others have done for you.</p> 	<p>Create and then share a card or a piece of art with someone you love.</p> 	<p>Go outside and find one thing that reminds you of someone. Share what you find and your why.</p>	<p>Create a cell phone / device parking lot so you can enjoy device-free moments together each day.</p>	<p>Find a deck of cards and play a game like Crazy Eights, Spoons or Go Fish.</p> 
<p>Find a joke that you love and share it with 2 other people in person, by phone, or virtually.</p>	<p>Work together to plan a 3-course meal. Write down / draw each part of the meal to share as the menu for the evening.</p>	<p>Go outside and find materials to create a centerpiece for others to enjoy!</p> 	<p>Name 3 things you are grateful for. Draw a picture or write a list of these things and then post in a prominent place.</p>	<p>Work to create 5 "happy cards" for seniors that are in a local nursing home. Drop them off for them to enjoy.</p>	<p>While washing your hands look at yourself in the mirror and tell yourself one thing you like about YOU!</p>	<p>Do one act of kindness to make life easier for someone.</p> 
<p>Thank 3 people you are grateful to and tell them why.</p> 	<p>Smile at the people you are with to brighten their day.</p> 	<p>Learn one new thing today and share what you learned with someone.</p> 	<p>Choose a favorite song(s) and enjoy a spontaneous dance party.</p> 	<p>Get a deck or two of cards and build a home. Talk about what makes a home safe and what connects us to others.</p>	<p>Go outside and enjoy a game of "Red Light, Green Light." Be sure to run, walk, slide, jump and enjoy other creative ways to move.</p>	<p>Design and create a musical instrument. Enjoy a sharing concert.</p> 
<p>Ask someone to do what you LOVE to do today.</p> 	<p>Send a message or letter to someone you cannot be with today.</p> 	<p>Find a favorite book and read it or share it with someone.</p> 	<p>Enjoy a scavenger hunt with someone. Both write lists of 5 things the other person will look for, switch lists and then GO!</p>	<p>Notice 5 things that are beautiful within your world. Share your ideas with someone.</p> 	<p>Learn how to play hopscotch and then PLAY!</p> 	<p>Thank someone and tell them how they make a difference for you.</p> 

Created by Master Instructor Kim Hughes, the Caring Connections Calendar features activities that strengthen relationships by practicing kindness, being grateful and spending quality time with those we love.

Each activity builds connection while encouraging kind acts, helpfulness and positivity. Like connection, being kind and helpful to others is a biological imperative that is required for optimal brain development.

It also releases feel-good chemicals and hormones, something we could all benefit from right now. Similarly, focusing on the positive creates more positivity.

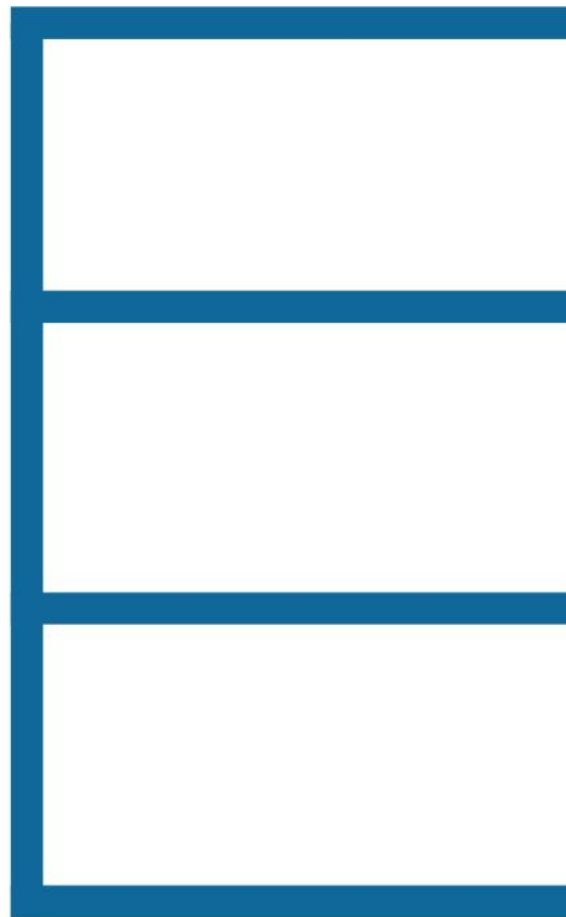
Practicing gratitude offers significant benefits for our mental and physical health, including enhanced empathy, better sleep and improved self-esteem. The activities included in the Caring Connections Calendar may seem simple, but the impact they'll have on you and your family is powerful.

Family Cell Phone Agreement & Cell Phone Parking Lot



Family Cell Phone Agreement

My family is important to me, so I am willing to park my cell phone in the cell phone parking lot during family times, such as mealtimes and family nights.



→ CELL PHONE PARKING →

Restore connection during mealtimes, family nights and other special family times by using the Family Cell Phone Agreement and Cell Phone Parking Lot.

Talk to your family about the importance of meaningful connection, and ask for their willingness to set aside cell phones and connect during family times.

patience.

Your
Questions

CONTACT ME



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