

Relationship Training

Maintaining relationships drives and feeds our neural pathways and eventually creates a healthy network for the biology (especially for females) that can mitigate stress. The predicting factor for health and lifelong success is the joy we find in relationships. The more socially connected to family, friends, and communities the better wellbeing. Healthy relationships predicted health at 50 years-old and self-reported happiness correlated with physical health.ⁱ



All projects should include explicit social skill instruction and practice. Strategies can be imbedded to learning content; like using video to teach curriculum and always reference social skills. Watching television shows facilitate discussion of appropriate social behavior. Watching video to learn content and skills allows that time to fill the dual purpose of teaching background knowledge as well as how to behave in society (like watching Sheldon, the gifted Physicist on the Autism Spectrum, in “Big Bang Theory.” He regularly says offensive things to his friends.)



Neurocinematics is the research that seeks to explain what happens in the brain while we are watching a movie. It shows brainwaves entrain and the primary auditory cortex is active, along with the visual cortex, along with the limbic system (depending on how emotional the scene is).ⁱⁱ Watching movies successfully trained newlyweds to consider their own behaviors and their partners and showed improved marriage self-rating by 24%.ⁱⁱⁱ

- Talking increases dopamine in the left hemisphere; those neurotransmitters lower cortisol, increase trust and bonding, and improve cognitive function.^{iv}.
- Prosocial behavior (talking, comforting, touching, hugging, empathy) increases activity in the brain’s pleasure center...our reward center. These behaviors activate our natural opioids, dopamine, oxytocin and endorphins.^v Estrogen enhances the effects.

- Social influence has profound impact on human behavior; online social media is powerful in the questions regarding behavior, technology and how much to share. (Graf-Vlachy et al 2018)
- Spending time with more individuals in a group results in an increase to cognitive intelligence; it's important to know behaviors of other individuals to increase chances of survival. (Hobson et al 2014)
- CDE supports curriculum that respects and works toward better relationships (see guide)

Strategies

Especially at a time of covering our face, we MUST train the importance of reading faces for emotion!

1. Share important stories, train to face one another when talking (with masks and 8 ft)
2. Find objects, photos, memories to bridge to connection (public speaking/writing/etc.)
3. When talking train to notice facial expression to understand speaker's meaning.
4. Use movies/television/devices for examples, especially if face coverings impede.
5. Ask 3 or more questions daily to get to know another (especially in the same household)
6. Tell another person one thing they appreciate about them (daily, weekly, or so)
7. Ask another person to discuss one or 2 goals and interests and accomplishments.

ⁱ Mineo, L. (2017). Harvard study almost 80 years ago has proved embracing community and improving relationships is helping us live longer. Harvard Gazette

Waldinger, R. (2015). Study of Adult Development. TED Talk

ⁱⁱ Hasson, U. (2008). Neurocinematics: The neuroscience of film. *Berghahn Journals*, 2(1).

ⁱⁱⁱ Rogge, R. D., Cobb, R. J., Lawrence, E., Johnson, M. D., & Bradbury, T. N. (2013). Is skills training necessary for the primary prevention of marital distress and dissolution? A 3-year experimental study of three interventions. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*.

^{iv} Fuertinger et al 2017. Dopamine drives left-hemispheric lateralization of neural networks during human speech. *Journal of Comparative Neurology*.

^v Pearce et. al. (2017) Variation in the b-endorphin, oxytocin, and dopamine receptor genes is associated with different dimensions of human sociality. *PNAS*