

"THE ONLY THING THAT REALLY MATTERS IN LIFE, IS YOUR RELATIONSHIPS TO OTHER PEOPLE"

George Vaillant

Since 1937, researchers from Harvard have followed 268 people in an attempt to discover a formula for "the good life" - what makes people happy. The Grant Study is probably the most thorough research of its type ever attempted. What in the end constitutes the good life? Consistently, makes us happy?

After nearly 75 years, the only consistent finding is that successful friendships are what predict people's happiness as they hurtle through life. Friendships are a better predictor than any other single variable. By the time a person reaches middle age, they are the only predictor.

Jonathan Haidt, a researcher who has extensively studied the link between socialisation and happiness states: "Human beings are in some ways like bees. We have evolved to live in intensely social groups, and we don't do as well when freed from hives."

More research has since confirmed and extended the simple findings of the Grant study. In addition to satisfying relationships, other behaviors that predict happiness include:

- a steady dose of altruistic acts
- making lists of things for which you are grateful, which generates feelings of happiness in the short term
- cultivating a general "attitude of gratitude," which generates feelings of happiness in the long term

- sharing novel experiences with a loved one
- deploying a ready "forgiveness reflex" when loved ones slight you.

**A deep sense of love and belonging
an irreducible need of all people. We
are biologically, cognitively,
physically, and spiritually wired to
love, to be loved, and to belong. When
those needs are not met, we don't
function as we were meant to. We
break. We fall apart. We numb. We
ache. We hurt others. We get sick.**

– Brene Brown

Can you connect in a micro-moment?



01 Share Positivity

Sharing a positive emotion multiplies the broaden and build benefits.



02 Connect Physically

Synchronise bio-behaviours with eye contact or matching body language or voice.



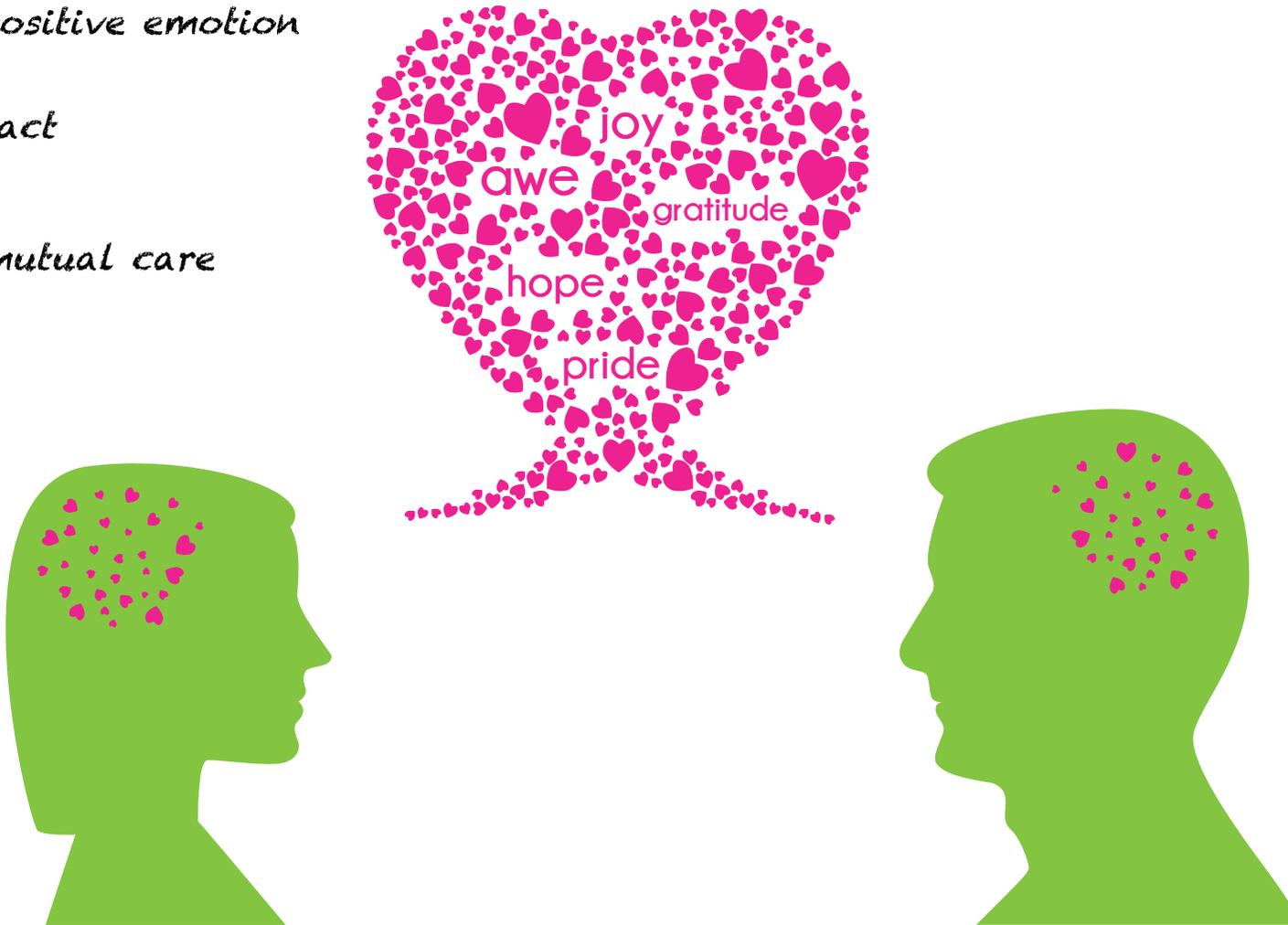
03 Invest In Trust

Invest in the feelings of warmth and trust to create an upward spiral of growth.

(Fredrickson, 2013)

What is positivity resonance?

1. Share a positive emotion
2. Eye contact
3. Reflect mutual care



“WE EACH CARRY AN INTRICATE MACHINERY OF LOVE, CALIBRATING AND ATTUNING OUR MOODS AND BODIES TO ONE ANOTHER.”

Barbara Fredrickson

Professor Barbara Fredrickson at the University of North Carolina and her colleagues (Kok & Fredrickson, 2013) have discovered that **it takes just a micro-moment of genuine connection to spark an upward spiral of mutual care between people.**

The research suggests all it takes are three simple steps:

- the **sharing of a positive emotion** like interest, joy, amusement or pride, for example;
- **synchronization of your biochemistry and behaviors through shared eye contact, body gestures or vocal tone** that literally causes your two brains to start dancing as one; and
- a **reflected** motive to invest in each other’s wellbeing that brings **mutual care.**

Fredrickson describes this process of connection between people as “positivity resonance”. She suggests we think of it like a mirror. You and the other person mirror the positivity in each other’s emotional state; you mirror each other’s body and brain activity; and you mirror each other’s impulse to care for one another. In this moment to some extent you each become the **reaction** and extension of the other. Truly making two heads better than one. Not only this but when we experience warm and trusting feelings towards each other it improves our vagal tone – which is the very subtle arrhythmia that occurs with each breath we take – to calm down our naturally high human heart rates helping us to regulate glucose and cardiovascular health, to regulate our attention and emotion at work and have better social skills.

How can you create more micro-moments In your relationships?

You’ll quickly find opportunities for micro-moments of connection with your family, and others each day.

Each time you interact with someone else take a moment to truly make eye contact with them or if you’re on the phone synchronise your tone of voice to theirs.

You might want to ask them: “What’s going well today?” Or “What’s been the highlight of your week?” Or even: “What are you looking forward to this month?” This is an easy way to spark off their positive emotions as they savour the good things happening to them. Of course other effective ways you can create shared positive emotions is to perform an act of kindness, express your appreciation or give them a reason to laugh.

Just try to make eye contact as you do it. Then as feelings of positivity resonate between you let that feeling of mutual care rise up knowing that you’ve made a genuine connection with the person.

You might also like to try spending 15 minutes a day practicing loving kindness meditation as Barbara Fredrickson’s research has found this works wonders on our vagal tone. If you want more on how these micro-moments impact our relationships, health and performance, check out Fredrickson’s book *Love 2.0* (2013).

CAN YOU CULTIVATE CLOSE CONNECTIONS?



Cultivate Positivity Resonance – Get and Give An Oxytocin Shot:

Positivity resonance has been shown to release oxytocin, a neuropeptide that supports the calm and connect response of the body and brain, muting the brains attunement to threat (fight/flight response) and amplifying its response to positive social connections.

Shared positive emotion, eye contact, voice tone, gestures, touch and creating a sense of shared care. Could you consciously create more micro moments of connection each day, giving yourself and someone else a shot of the feel good hormone oxytocin?



Be Present: *“The best thing you can offer someone is your presence.”*

Being present means being open to what is, being aware of what is happening as it is happening. When we are truly present, we resonate with what is going on for another person, creating a sensation of them “feeling felt”. Feeling felt, is the basis for secure attachment. It is also the essence of healthy relationships in all domains of our lives.

Regardless of whether you have 10 minutes, an hour, or the whole day, don't just be there, be present and in those moments, be sure to rid yourself of distractions, including your smartphone.



Slow down – Find your Third Space

Presence, requires us to stop; to take time; to listen deeply and to focus all of our attention on what's happening in the moment - without making judgments or offering solutions. In other words, to fully 'be with' each other, requires us to be mindful. Take time when transitioning from one "role" to another to reflect, rest and reset so that you're ready to be present and bring your best self to each person/occasion.



Use your eyes to connect.

Eye contact may well be the most potent trigger for connection and oneness. When there is no eye contact, touch, laughter or behavioural synchrony, the interaction may be likened to “parallel play” – there is no resonance. When it comes to trying to create connection “catch their eyes,” by sharing a joke, a memory, or a vulnerable moment. These micro-moments of powerful connection, are essential nutrients of life and most of us aren't getting enough of them.



Ask appreciative questions

and respond actively and constructively. Asking appreciative questions invites others to share their interests, passions, successes and dreams, creating an easy way to spark positive emotions. When people share their good news draw them out by asking what they love most about the event, what role they played in making the event happen, what they are most proud of; Deliberately asking appreciative and probing questions, energises your relationships, enabling others to feel valued, understood and more deeply known by you.