

Johann Hari's *Model* for Connected Living



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“I am a part of all that I have met.” – Lord Tennyson

“The views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy of the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.”

Johann Hari's Model: Connected Living



As we look toward solutions for getting our emotions and lives on track, we must have a template for what healthy lifestyles looks like.

One of the most influential books that I have found to address this issue is the groundbreaking book, *Lost Connections* by Johann Hari (2018). In this book award-winning journalist and critical thinker, Johann Hari, who suffered from depression since he was a child, set out on a three-year journey around the world to seek answers to his own depression.

He talked with psychiatrists, epidemiologists, neurologists, neuroscientists, social scientists, and many other experts in their fields of **study around the globe** and explored different cultures and how they fared with these issues.

In addition, he conducted a **comprehensive review of the literature**. He concluded that much of what we have been led to believe about the genesis and treatment of depression and anxiety is off the mark in many ways.

He determined that in many cases depression and anxiety are the result of crucial and growing **problems with the way we are living our lives**. He discovered that there are nine underlying causes of these problems which are summarized as follows (Hari, 2018):

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➔ One: Connection to Meaningful Work:

- A **lack of control** and little connection between **effort and reward** are highly predictive of depression and suicide in the workplace (Marmot et al., 2002).
- Gallup study found that twice as many people in 2011 to 2012 hated their jobs as love their jobs (Marmot et al., 2002).
- Takeaway: Ensure you are connected to meaningful and fulfilling work both at the workplace and at home. For teens and many young adults, the workplace is school so attention must be given to making this a successful and meaningful endeavor.



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► Two: Connection to Meaningful People:

- Pinker (2015) followed both isolated and highly connected people over nine years and found that isolated people were **two to three times more likely to die during lonely periods.**
- Cacioppo (2006, 2008, 2010) studied the impact that loneliness has on health. He and his colleagues determined that loneliness causes **cortisol levels to go through the roof.**



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Two: Connection to Meaningful People - continued:

➤ Cacioppo (2013) reported a rather shocking meta-analysis study of over 100,000 participants which found increased risks of dying early due to living with the following:

- Air pollution: 5% increased risk of dying early
- Obesity: 20% risk of dying early
- Alcoholism: 30% risk of dying early
- Loneliness: 45% risk of dying early

➤ Takeaway: Ensure that you are connected with family and good friends in 3D, face-to-face relationships.



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Two: Connection to Meaningful People - continued:

2018 CIGNA Study

NATIONAL RESULTS
**YOUNGER GENERATIONS ARE LONELIER THAN
OLDER GENERATIONS**



**The youngest and most
connected are the loneliest.**

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➤ Three – Connection to Meaningful Values:

- Overvaluing **money** and **possessions** leads to higher scores of **depression** (Belk, 1983). Kasser's (2002) research specifically determined that the more materialistic you are the more likely you are to score higher on measures of depression.
- **Takeaway:** It is a powerful thing to contemplate your values and what makes you and your family unique. Knowing your values helps build a firm foundation on which to heal.

➤ Four – Disconnection from Childhood Trauma:

- As noted earlier, the Kaiser Study of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) indicated that for every category of trauma experienced as a child, he/she was dramatically more likely to be depressed as an adult (Felitti et al., 2014; Felitti, 2004).
- **Takeaway:** Seek a competent trauma therapist to address unresolved childhood trauma less you be tempted to continue consuming pornography or another addiction to self-medicate the pain.



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► Five – Connection to Status and Respect:

- Like our primate cousins, low ranking individuals show changes in the brain, specifically the **pituitary and adrenal glands** (Sapolsky, 1992; 2002).
- As Twenge (2006) in her book *Generation Me* astutely pointed out, **self-esteem** is not based on air, but on **mastery and real-world competence**.
- **Takeaway:** Build self-respect and confidence based on competence. This is foundational for resilience and regulated emotions.



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► Six: Connection to the Natural World:

- Bonobos in the wild can become sad or depressed, but there is a limit to how far they will go. In captivity, they become extremely depressed and often self-injure and/or rock compulsively (interview with Isabel Behncke cited in Hari, 2018).
- **“Nature Deficit Disorder”** - Humans are hard-wired for a genuine nature connection (Louv, 2005).
- Louv (2005) stated that many psychological problems in kids today are **related to an erosion of their connection with nature and immersion** into the digital world.
- **Takeaway:** Get yourself outside exercising and/or enjoying the beauty of the outdoors! The colors green and blue actually regulate the nervous system.



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➔ Seven – Connection to a Hopeful and Secure Future:

- As Native Americans were stripped of their identities, they lost their connection to the future, they became **increasingly depressed, and then often resorted to alcohol** which often culminated in addiction (Hari, 2018).
- **Takeaway:** Many of us are in the same boat and have lost sight of a secure future. We need to find a way to foster competence and hope.

➔ Eight – Connection to Faith (emphasis mine):

- Observational studies suggest that people who have regular spiritual practices tend to **live longer** (Strawbridge et al., 1997).
- Religious commitment may improve stress control by affording **better coping mechanisms, richer social support, and the strength of personal values** and worldview (Koenig et al., 1997).
- **Takeaway:** Consider pursuing faith in something beyond yourself – your emotional and physical health might thank you one day.





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In conclusion, connection is a very powerful force for healthy development, emotional healing, and life satisfaction. Johann Hari offers a roadmap for connection to all good things and I encourage us to stay on the course he recommends. We cannot go wrong.