

The Science of Happiness and Wellbeing
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Module No # 04
Lecture No # 16
Relationship – Connected and Happy

Morning friends by now we have already covered more than 15 sessions initially I started with an overview. Then we moved into the basics and during the basics which were primarily covered by professor Mandal we focused on the science of happiness and the questions of are we happy or not myths related to happiness and unhappiness unanswered questions related to them. And then of course we, moved into the genetic aspect of happiness empathy and other qualities that were discussed.

Money and happiness morality and I also discussed with you certain things related to the self, others pro-sociality. And now we are moving into what can be considered as the section where we connect the dots they are very strongly linked to happiness. But if we suddenly say that they are connected to happiness, somebody might raise his or her eyebrows and say well I do not see how the connection is there and that is/has why we call this section connecting the dots.

Relationships networks how did they contribute to happiness? Because you see that the moment we talk about the self, the self makes sense only in the context of the other so between the self and the other what we have is a kind of a relationship. But is that a good enough definition of relationship or do we need to define it further what exactly is relationship? What are its various components? How does relationship play out in different contexts?

And what is the relevance of relationship in the context of happiness? These are the fundamental questions that we would try to address in this particular session.

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Poll

Friends

Facebook friends

Good friends

Recently during some of our classes, we took a poll about friends how many friends do you have? How many good friends do you have how many Facebook friends do you have? In the next session we will be talking about networking where the quality of your friends in specific ways would also determine your ability to be happy unhappy and your ability to make others happy and unhappy as well but that is another story.

The general, tendency when we took a survey was to find that friends ranged between anything between 5 to 15 or 20. And that also tells a lot about the introverted or the extroverted character of a person when we talked about good friends range between 0 to 5 or 6 real good friends with whom you can share everything. And that also tells about both your personality trait but more important whether you are happy, or unhappy.

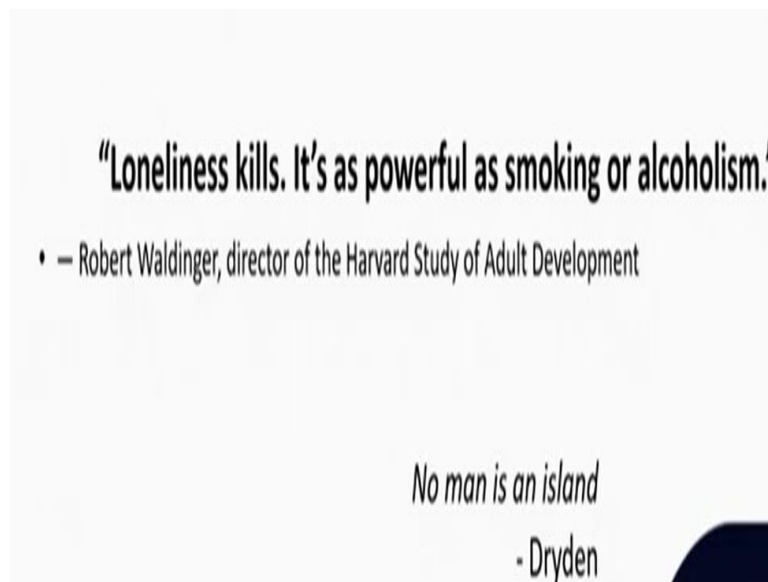
There is a possibility that people who have less number of good friends very good and intimate friends have a poorer support system. And the possibility of slipping into unhappiness or not being able to recover from unhappiness is probably greater for them. Imagine a person who goes into depression now very often relationships and support systems help this person get out, of it.

And if that support system is weak then the probability that this person will stay within unhappiness for a longer period of time is more. Facebook friends is a different story altogether our students reported anything between 200 to 2000 Facebook friends. But then of course you probably would not be able to remember more than names of 200 people social media and making friends there is a whole, different ball game.

And let me share with you probably often leads to greater possibility of unhappiness than happiness. Because social media is a space where you project yourself you want to put your best foot forward and so not necessarily who you are or what you are but what you would like to be it is more of a projection of the self. Than what the self at the core is it is more about patting one, another on the back than coming up with a real support system where required.

But of course there are exceptions however the focus today is not on social media its on relationships.

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And I will go by 2 quotes there is one of them is that “loneliness kills it is as powerful as smoking or alcoholism”. And this is based on the insights of a Harvard study that we will discuss a little later. The second, quote is from the Elizabethan poet John Donne “no man is an island” now Donne is talking of something which is very very significant where in his sonnet he starts with the fact that human beings are not isolated they are in a relationship.

But more important than that they are so; intrinsically connected with one another that any loss in any part of humanity is a loss of the self. Now this is the point that, we would focus on as we go ahead.

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The Harvard Study

- 1938 (Great Depression), 268 Harvard Sophomores recruited
- One of the longest longitudinal studies
- 19 of them are still alive! (in their mid 90s)
- Areas explored and mapped:
 - Health
 - Relationship
 - Success
 - Marriage

Now if you are looking at the Harvard study this is a very interesting study in 1938 during the great depression 268 Harvard freshers joined the study and it is what is known as a longitudinal study what is a longitudinal study? It is a study which goes on with the same group over a number of period number of years. Imagine that even today some of the people are, still alive and the study continues.

So out of 268 19 of 19 are still alive they are in their mid-nineties. The significant areas which were explored were health relationship success marriage and it was interestingly found that they are all linked to one another. They are correlated which causes the other is a different story altogether we are not going to go into that but it is definitely the case the people who, are healthy also happen to be in good relationship. Also happen to have a well-defined understanding or a feeling that they are successful and tend to have a good marriage they are all positively correlated.


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Key findings:

- “The surprising finding is that our relationships and how happy we are in our relationships has a powerful influence on our health,” said Robert Waldinger, director of the study, a psychiatrist at Massachusetts General Hospital and a professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.
- “Taking care of your body is important, but tending to your **relationships is a form of self-care too**. That, I think, is the revelation.”
- Research finds correlation between men’s flourishing lives and their relationships with **family, friends, and community**
- The people who were the most satisfied in their relationships at age 50 were the healthiest at age 80

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2017/04/over-nearly-80-years-harvard-study-has-been-showing-how-to-live-a-healthy-and-happy-life/>



Now you see that one of the important things that emerged was the significance of relationship. And as I can very briefly put the finding was that the people who were in good relationship lived, longer and people were in bad relationship lived for a shorter period of time. So people who were most satisfied in their relationships at the age of 50 were still healthy at the age of 80. So these; long-term impacts of good relationship makes us realize that we cannot neglect the significance of relationships.

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Defining relationship

- What is relationship?
- What are its key components?
- What are the various types of relationship?
- What are the distances related to relationship?
- How do relationships affect pro-social behaviour?

But then what is relationship we probably understood right at the beginning that when we, connect with one another. The very fact that I requires another in order to be complete to create a world means that the very moment identity is created it is based on the realization that there are other people who supplement and complement identity to create a complete world. But then probably relationship has its various components there are different categories there are different distances, in relationships and of course their impact on our levels of happiness.

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What is relationship?

- The way in which two or more people or things are connected, or the state of being connected.
- The term 'relationship' in dictionaries (Oxford, Cambridge, Macmillan, Longman, Collins, and Merriam-Webster Dictionaries) emphasizes on ways of connection, individual or group behaviour towards one another, emotional and sexual association, living together, mutual feelings, mutual dealings and exchange, kinship, romance, friendship, and attachment.

(refer time: 09:34) Here is a kind of a brief definition of relationship I and one of my junior colleagues came up with when we were working and he was working towards his PHD. The focus as you can see over here is on the element of connection with individuals or groups a significant amount of emotional and physical association of being, physically or mentally together. Feelings mutual dealings or exchanges being a part of kinship and of course romance friendship and attachment these were key concepts that emerged again and again as we went through that.

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Key components?

- People
- Things
- Interactions
- Bonds
- Rules
- Actions
- Attitudes
- Exchanges
- Modes
- ...

So if you are looking at it closely you find that relationship consists of a series of components these happen to be people things which interact and in the process of interaction, buildup bonds. But these are not arbitrary these are based on certain rules or norms or group norms. Actions

reflected through actions attitudes which determine those actions and exchanges in terms of not only intangible things like speech but also tangible things like material things.

And which happened through different modes both physical, material, cultural, social, verbal non-verbal and so on you, can always keep on adding components to this.

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When we start talking about types of relationships then we started finding that they could also be classified in various different ways. If you are looking at the context of kinship you are talking about family romance community groups collectives nations. You can have positive emotions negative ambivalent ambiguous emotions or ambiguous relationships. You, can have hierarchies of relationships where people are either equal or superior inferior to one another or again in indeterminate.

Even in a relationship between a husband and a wife or between a brother and a sister there is an element of power. This is something which may be stable or unstable but it is very much there interestingly when we are talking about relationship one of the points I forgot to, mention when I was talking about the Harvard study is that. A relationship with the self is also equally important so self-care was identified as a different pie very important parameter in the context of sustainability of happiness and well-being as well as physical health.

So your relationship with your own self how happy or unhappy you are with yourself is also very important. And we have earlier, talked about the fragmented nature of self so it makes sense with social exchanges or relationship with specific individuals or even groups of individuals they also play a significant role. And then of course relationships based on gender

based on profession, based on attitudes community, based on space and the story continues you can come up with more categories of relationships.

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Relationships and the way they affect others

- Gratitude? (social distance)
- Generosity?
- Trust?
- Social support?

And then of course, what are the key components we have already talked about some of them in the context of pro-sociality are related to relationship gratitude for one generosity for another trust. And if you are looking at a more collectivistic context; social support community level support. If anything goes wrong with one individual or one family in a village a cohesive unit then you find that the others come to, support them.

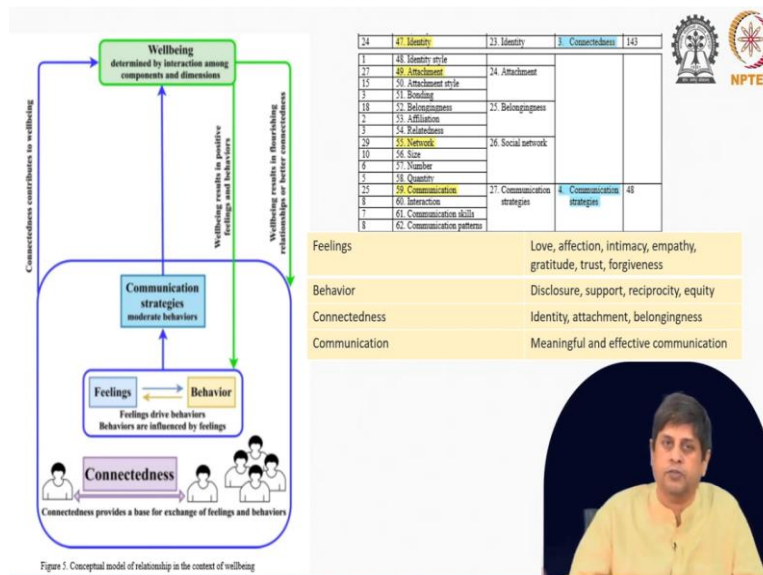
We found that with a couple of villages in the Chilika Lagoon where we went for a field survey that they have a system where if there is a crop failure for one person or a one family. Then they have a support system they have a reserve both in terms of food resources as well as other kinds of material resources which are made available to this particular family during a point of crisis.

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In terms of behaviour disclosure support reciprocity and equity disclosure gets linked to the element of trust support we have talked about reciprocity in the context of give and take that we have already discussed earlier. And equity equitability which gives a sense of dignity in a non-hierarchical relationship were found to be significant. Connectedness at various levels identity group identity clan identity identities of various kinds.

Even in social media we find that groups are formed based on different kinds of hobbies and things like that. So connectedness in terms of the kind of collective self-identity and group identities that you have attachments that you form amongst, people bondings that you create with objects even and a sense of belongingness very very important. You need to belong to a community you need to belong to a place and this is so closely linked to your sense of identity.

And then of course all these things need to be communicated because relationships cannot exist without communication. So meaningful and effective communication and we kind of schematized, that when we had all these components together as you can see on the left hand side in the image we have a kind of a conceptual understanding of what relationship is all about?

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Relationship and wellbeing

- Findings of happiness research (Handbook of Happiness, 2006)
- The Bangladesh case study (Camfield et al, 2009)
- The kolkata case study (Diener and Diener, 2001)
- The different kinds of relationships studied (Fingerman and Hay, 2002)

**Does relationship only mean family?
What about community members and co-workers?**

Table 2. Proportion of studies examining each type of relationship

| Relationship | Studies (N = 976) |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Spouse | .443 |
| Young child | .256 |
| Romantic ties | .252 |
| Parents | .166 |
| Friend | .122 |
| Unspecified family relationships | .079 |
| Adult child | .075 |
| Stepchild | .043 |
| Sibling | .041 |
| Unspecified supportive relationships | .031 |
| Lesbian/Gay partner | .017 |
| Acquaintance | .015 |
| Grandparent | .015 |
| Best Friend | .012 |
| Coworker | .011 |
| Schoolmate | .011 |
| Grandchild | .010 |

Personal Relationships, 9 (2002), 411-421. Printed in the United States of America.
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Searching under the streetlight?: Age biases in the personal and family relationships literature
 KAREN L. FINGERMANN AND ELIZABETH L. HAY
 The Pennsylvania State University

Earlier studies indicated that relationship at least when it comes to research was mostly studied in the context of what is known as personal relationship like spouses young children romantic ties parents friends. In fact, romantic ties got the most emphasis even in research in terms of newspaper reporting in terms of social media everywhere romance friendship kids a lot of emphasis.

But even in research you find that it got the maximum amount of emphasis but what about digital relationships? What about your workplace relationships? What; about your community level relationships which are so significant in countries, like India especially in villages. So the fundamental question is that when we talk about relationship are we only talking about families are we talking only about romantic relationships but what about community workers and co-workers community members co-workers neighbours.

If you are looking at a city context you no longer have a very cohesive village kind of a community categorized or based on, clan relationships and things like that. But on in a metropolis you have them based on the different apartments you live in and the kinds of neighbors you have this also plays significant role in the context of understanding more about relationships.

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Let us take a moment to think...

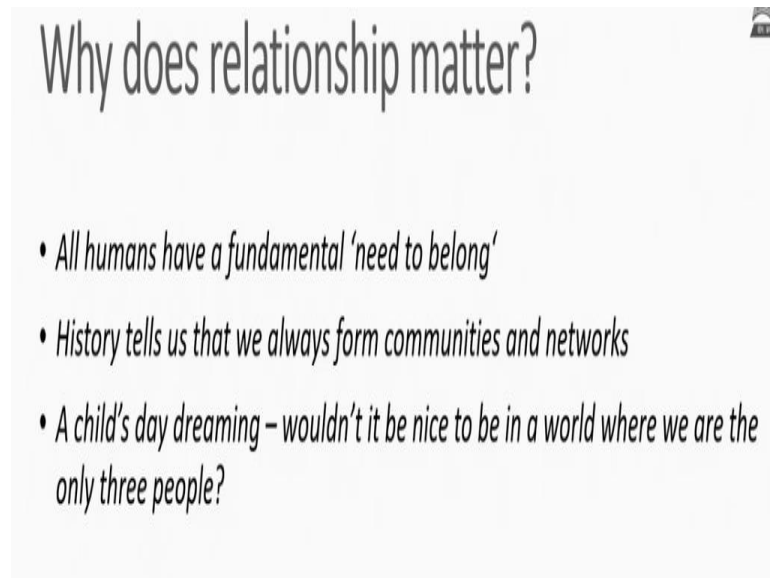
- Rate on a scale of 0 (least important) to 5 (very important) ... the following items for our happiness and wellbeing:
 - Money (after you have enough for all your needs)
 - Health
 - Relationship
 - Physical infrastructure
 - Freedom, choice, etc

Here is something which you can do you can take a moment out and you can do that. On a scale of 1 to 5 if you are looking at these 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 parameters where would you put rank relationships incidentally let me share a brief anecdote with you. When the first years come to the IIT's as they came to this IIT as well we asked them this question that in the context of relationship who is it that is very important for you?

And the response was obvious their tears are still not dried up they have come 2 weeks back very strongly, attached to their parents. So their relationships centered around, their families parents, brothers and sisters grandparents in some cases if you talked about the close friends back at school or in their communities. Fast forward 12 months the same question was asked to students and there was a radical transformation.

This time it was friends only the parents were somewhere in the background the focus has shifted but what had not shifted was the emphasis on relationship. Relationship still counted as very very important for them in the context of their well-being and happiness especially in a place where which is unfamiliar to them which is new to them. And obviously here their family was their friends in an inanimate context it was their hostels or halls to which they were so attached in terms of space and in, terms of human beings friends.

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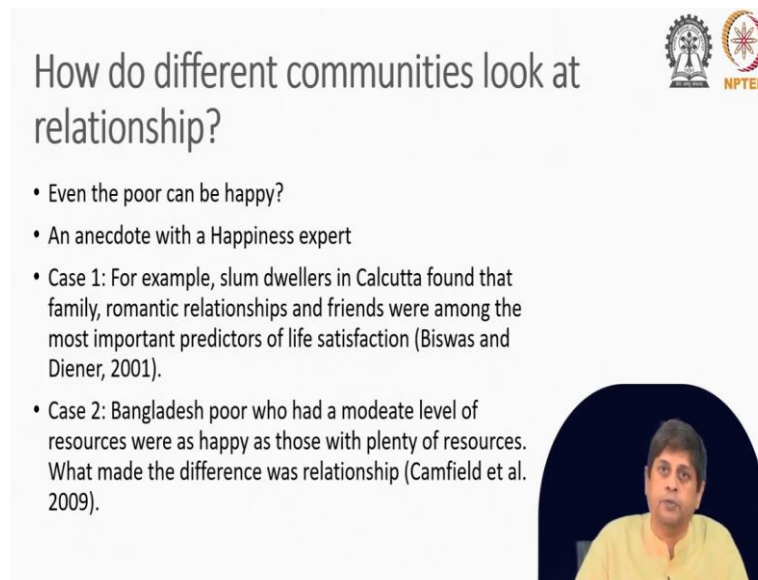
So the question that comes up is that why does relationship matter there can be so many different theoretical orientations to it. All humans have a fundamental need to belong to something or the other it is not only that no man is an island it is also that he or she needs to belong to not just one community but a group of communities. First a community ethnic community in, terms of your birth and the kind of relatives that you have kinship which; is very very significant.

But as you grow and evolve especially in a modern world the community of your own profession community of your own hobbies community of your own interests or even the interest of your spouse these play become very significant. You need to belong somewhere where people accept it and then of course for our, very survival as we have discussed off and on in the earlier classes. You need to survive you need to be a part of a community so relationships do matter.

And I am focusing on the community because all this while the focus on individual dietetic relationship or small groups is something which seems to be very obvious. What we failed to probably realize is that relationships extend beyond let us say, husband and wife parents and children lovers people and relationships or very close friends. It goes beyond it goes to the

workplace it goes to the neighborhood it goes to the community and apparently findings suggest that these also play a very significant role in the context of our happiness and well-being.

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How do different communities look at relationship?

- Even the poor can be happy?
- An anecdote with a Happiness expert
- Case 1: For example, slum dwellers in Calcutta found that family, romantic relationships and friends were among the most important predictors of life satisfaction (Biswas and Diener, 2001).
- Case 2: Bangladesh poor who had a moderate level of resources were as happy as those with plenty of resources. What made the difference was relationship (Camfield et al. 2009).

The slide also features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner and a small video inset of a man in a yellow shirt in the bottom right corner.

Now when we are talking about different communities and relationships and their happiness, some very interesting things have emerged. The citations are given at the end the question is even the poor can be happy it was a question that was raised when if couple of years back we got a happiness expert from another country who was shocked to see the level of poverty in India and then exclaimed how can such poor people be happy?

On the other hand you see that we realize that irrespective of, whether people are rich or poor in general in a community people have a certain sense of happiness. The material element of happiness is probably linked to the community health. I mean if the community health is good irrespective of how rich or poor they are and if they are cohesive our field experiences in Chilika lagoon and other places have shown that there is a very strong level of happiness, linked to social cohesion to community level relationships.

The same was reiterated in studies that were done in Calcutta or in Bangladesh where irrespective of whether they were rich or poor their bonding with other people in the community made them happier.

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Urban vs. Rural?



- Forgiveness (in rural community) – relevant for survival
- Freedom (in urban communities) – relevant in personal relationships
- Working together (in rural communities) – not highlighted! But in urban context highlighted!
- Non-interference (in urban communities) – community level
- Good behaviour – rural community
- Help – rural community
- Support – urban communities
- Festival – urban communities

Some findings from MS "Does Indian urban-rural divide hold good for relationships and happiness: an exploration," Rashmi Ranjan Behera and Priyadarshi Patnaik. Copyrighted material 2019. Not to be shared with anyone.



There are other issues that need to be discussed as well and these happen to be related to the element of urban and rural areas and their, levels of happiness. Because in a vast country like India if you are talking about relationships and if you do not take into consideration the geographical locations then we are doing injustice we are giving you an incomplete picture. And this was again as part of a study some of it now already published of one of our scholars.

And the focus and the insights that were derived were that in rural, communities forgiveness working together good behavior help these things figured as significant components which were related to community cohesiveness. On the other hand when; you talked about the urban context the element of freedom along with relationship or in the context of relationship. Support rather than help, help is where it is unconditional support is where you pay money for it but it is, available and festivals played a significant role in the context of relationships.

And these were very very different for rural and urban populations. To cut a long story short what we realize is that different communities emphasize different aspects in the context of relationships. In order to make them happy or unhappy in other words a relationship is undoubtedly important. But which aspect of, relationship is important in which context will differ from communities to communities from rural to urban context from countries to countries and this is something which we need to take into consideration.

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What is determined by this?

- Happiness, wealth, health...
- Situational inequality in network affects this
- Example of epidemic hysteria in Tanzania
- **Emotion contagion**
- The hot spice experiment

So learning points, the learning point that we would like to focus on or emphasize is that now that we know that relationship is very very significant can we use this insight or this understanding to, bring about a change to make life better. Earlier we have talked about pro-sociality gratitude support connectedness generosity social exchange give and take they all operate within the framework of relationships.

Post COVID during COVID we faced a certain crisis of relationships and post covid we face a different crisis where children are again going through the crisis of learning, how to socialize and showing a lot of isolated behaviour. There is one point I would like to make as we sum up the session which is that loneliness today has become a disease it is now established as a significant and alarming issue so much so that in the UK you have a separate wing which deals with loneliness.

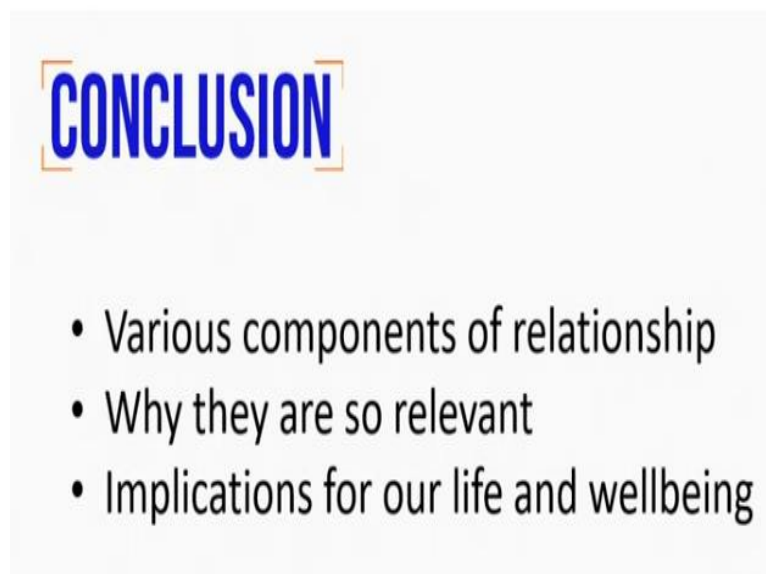
And in the US in the corporate context in the context of workplace loneliness has been, identified as a very very significant aspect of crisis in terms of human happiness. And it goes without saying that loneliness obviously is inversely linked to good relationship that tells us a lot about where we are. So you take a moment to reflect because today in this short talk we are not only talking about the academic context or the framework within which we understand relationship.

But we are also, requesting you to reflect on your own relationships and see how through your own relationships you can bring about changes to yourself and the change and changes to the people all around you. If you are asking what is at stake what; is the impact of a good

relationship. Then obviously happiness wealth and health because if you are well connected you not only survive mentally you also survive, in terms of your material needs.

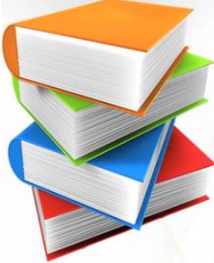
And then of course as we will be discussing as we go ahead in the next session a relationships can affect how we influence other people. And the fact that these influences can have significant impact on the people who surround us and the people who surround the people who surround us so there is a chain impact. And all these things are directly connected with, relationships.


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So in summary we have talked about various components of relationship types of relationship we have indicated why they are so relevant and we have also briefly discussed their relevance in the context of life and well-being. So as we go ahead with these sessions we will soon be taking up other aspects of emotions and the betweenness a relationship from a different perspective as, professor Mandal takes these classes forward.

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So with these we will stop today the references are they are both in the slides as well as here. Some of them will be made available to you by our team and I hope that you will enjoy these interactions thank you.