

The Science of Happiness and Wellbeing
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Module No # 04
Lecture No # 20
Sharing and Belonging

Welcome to this lecture series on science of happiness and well-being today's talk relates to sharing and belongingness which is a pillar for all kinds of happiness that we experience in our day-to-day life. In fact human being has got three major motives one motive belongs to power one motive belongs to our achievement and the last being the affiliation. We all understand what do we mean, by power and we also understand what do we mean by achievement?

Affiliation is a motive which is a primary motive because in order to survive its important that we affiliate with each other and belong to a group. A sort of membership to a community to a group to a party to an organization wherever we believe that we need to belong? And this belongingness gives us some kind of meaningfulness.

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The slide features the 'Concepts covered' logo in the top left corner. In the top right corner, there are two circular logos: one for the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur and another for NPTEL. The main content of the slide is a list of three questions under the heading 'Do people belong to each other already?'. To the right of the questions is a photograph of a young child being held by an adult. Below the photograph, the text 'Source: Getty image' is visible. The slide has a decorative orange horizontal bar and a dark blue arch shape at the bottom.

Concepts covered

Do people belong to each other already?

- Does belongingness make us happy?
- Why is it so fundamental?
- Do we need to unlock belongingness?

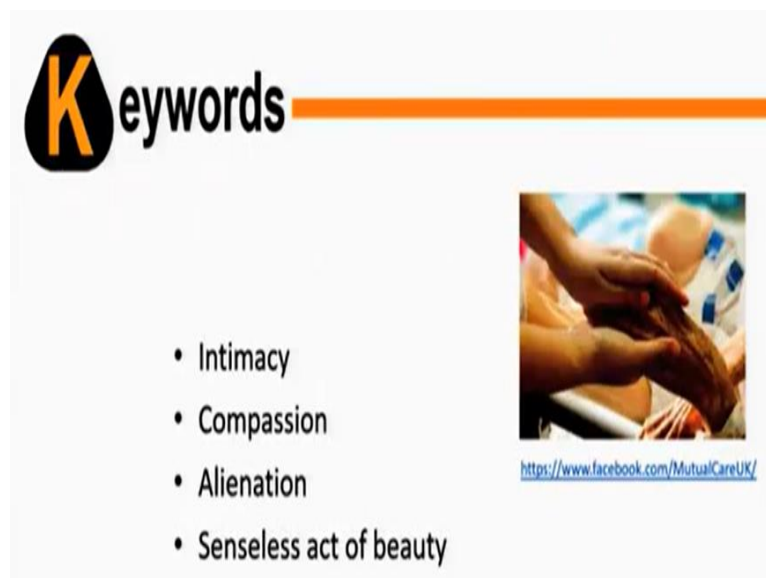
Source: Getty image

Therefore, the concept that we are going to discuss is belongingness and sharing and how does it make us happy. 3 major questions we have the primary question of course do people belong to each other already that is before we are born do we have some kind of trait which is already with us. And towards this end we put forward 3 questions one is that does belongingness make us happy.

If I belong to a group, a community a party to organization a social affiliate does it make us happy in fact you must have noticed that by developing belongingness we can sacrifice even our personal identity. Therefore its very important to understand in which way belongingness make us happy the question is, is it so fundamental that we can call it as something which is already with us.


If we believe that it is already with us, with the human system then the question is do we need to unlock it that is if it is biologically ingrained embodied or hard wired with our system do we need to unlock it through certain social signals? These are the questions we would be discussing and we will also discuss in this process whether this belongingness also give us meaningfulness in life or not.

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Keywords

- Intimacy
- Compassion
- Alienation
- Senseless act of beauty



<https://www.facebook.com/MutualCareUK/>

Certain concepts we need to discuss in, order to explain these issues in an elaborative manner one relates to intimacy one relates to compassion. First let us understand what do, we mean by intimacy and compassion. Intimacy is a sort of physical belongingness where we feel attached to each other whereas compassion is something which we will of course understand slightly in a bigger way later on where we are ready to suffer with a sense of, togetherness.

That is if somebody is getting pain I am ready to endure the pain because it belong to that particular person group party or an organization. But if I do not belong at all to anyone will I be happy by developing belongingness for myself. No, therefore the concept of alienation has come alienation is not depression as it is commonly understood. Alienation is a sense of loneliness even amongst a group of people to which you belong if you are not really belonging to actually.

Simply having some kind of membership to a group does not make us belong belongingness is something more than that we will understand about it. And finally we talk will talk about a concept called senseless act of beauty. This is a random kindness senseless act of beauty is random kindness a concept originally, conceived by Anne Herbert will finally discuss about this concept where you feel that you do not have to premeditate yourself in order to be kind to someone.

You do not need to get some kind of benefit out of it by having this sort of kindness this is no philanthropy. Neither it is altruism you simply do it because you love it and you believe that you belong to a group therefore you do it this is, what is called senseless act of beauty. Once again I repeat this is neither philosophy of philanthropy nor it is somewhat what we say as altruism.

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How does belongingness affect well-being?

Belongingness is a basic need

- We develop intimacy in this process
- Intimacy gives us the sense of connectivity, like being loved
- The connectivity allows us to give back to those we are attached to...*increasing our well-being*

With these notions will try to understand what belongingness is all about now belongingness is considered to be a basic need like any other need anger thirst fight, flight its a basic need. And this basic need I mean is with the human system not only with, the human being it is found in animals as well we develop intimacy in this process. And when we develop intimacy we develop connectivity also with others.

Because by simply having; intimacy is more physically intensive whereas connectedness is more emotionally intensive. Therefore we need to be loved not only love others we want a reciprocation of certain kinds of love from others as well therefore, intimacy and connectivity are slightly different one is more physically endowed other is more emotionally endowed. And

when you are connected with someone this connectivity allows you to give it back that is you want to reciprocate.


And through that reciprocation you develop attachment and through that attachment we develop a sense of well-being. So belongingness and well-being is very very intimately, related but I would like to repeat this concept of intimacy and connectedness intimacy is more physically tuned and connectedness is more emotionally tuned. And if we are feeling connected then we also feel to reciprocate that connectivity that is we want to give it back to others.

Now this reciprocation process improves our social connectivity and social relationship which ultimately gives us some, kind of well-being.

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Belongingness: why is it so fundamental?

- Need for survival & reproduction
- Ambiguity & interpretation
- Social exclusion & adaptation
- Conformity & behaviour mimicry
- Meaning via intimacy



Maslow's hierarchy of needs

The pyramid is divided into five levels, from bottom to top: Physiological (red), Safety (orange), Love/belonging (yellow), Esteem (green), and Self-actualization (blue).



A small video frame in the bottom right corner shows a man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a light green shirt, speaking.

Well this belongingness is considered fundamental even at the most important theory of human motivation. Now Abraham Maslow when he developed this theory of human motivation he says that it is a need hierarchy theory it is a sort of need which is hierarchically balanced. At the basic need is our biological need our physiological need that is unless this need is satisfied we cannot go to the higher levels of need.

And beyond that higher level is something called safety need that we want ourselves not only to be biologically fulfilled we also want to be safe safety is also a basic need which Maslow has mentioned about it. The third of course comes is belongingness which we are actually discussing at this point of time. So what is very important that once your biological, needs are satisfied and your security need is satisfied then you want to belong to some group.

Because as long you do not belong your self-esteem will not come up you will never feel that you are also being loved so self-esteem becomes a higher order need from the belongingness net. And finally it comes to self-actualization where you believe that whatever you wanted to achieve in your life you, could achieve it. So that is Maslow's need hierarchy theory and in that need hierarchy theory I am sure you can actually look into the belongingness need which is marked in yellow.

However it is important to understand why it is so fundamental one of the reason is that as I said if you do not belong to someone if you do not develop intimacy even through physical and emotional connectivity. Then, it is not possible for reproduction of human species therefore need for intimacy and need for belongingness is very fundamental and attached to our evolution.

Not only that; it also gives us meaning whenever we are having facing an anti-ambiguous situation. Whenever we try to find meaning out of something so interpretation meaning ambiguity resolve everything is being done through belongingness need. Finally this social exclusion and adaptation is also very important because if you do not belong to a group if you do not belong to a sort of membership with other groups then you will not be able to learn how to adapt with others?

You would not be able to confirm the kind of behavior which the group really wants you to develop. Therefore the development of meaning and finding some kind of, intimacy is possible through belongingness. Put together our basic need of belongingness has a role to play in our survival in understanding a situation which is otherwise ambiguous to get rid of some kind of situation which I call a social exclusion.



And then if you can adapt well you can conform to a particular situation or group's ideals or identities and then you find meaning why you should go, ahead and develop an intimacy with that. That is the reason you must have noticed that when we belong to someone when we belong to a family when you belong to a party when we belong to an organization. We develop some kind of strength we find meaning why I belong to?

You try to adapt with the group's ideals because you belong to therefore belongingness and well-being is very very intimately related.

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Belongingness...

- *Empathy* : feeling with the realization what the other is experiencing
- *Compassion* : feeling as 'another' & willingness to assist
- *Transcendence*: Feeling with a transformative potential (*intersubjective state of self-hood*)

NPTEL

Now, let us try to understand certain concepts related to this as I said already that empathy is very important but we must also understand how empathy is slightly different? Because belongingness need if you try to isolate the concepts behind it we require empathy we require compassion we require transcendence. Empathy is the feeling of realization what other is experiencing? So in the other talks we have mentioned that when you put yourself into other's shoes.

Then you realize what kind of pain what kind of psychological status in status the person is having. So empathy is getting the feeling what other is actually experiencing but when we come to compassion is something you fill as another and then you develop the willingness to assist. You develop the connectedness so that you can suffer together you are ready to suffer together.


Because compassion comes when somebody is in pain when somebody is in danger in such case if you feel that you are also a party to that suffering and you are ready to endure that then you develop the compassion. Transcendence come the highest order which is a feeling with a transformative potential when you believe that by developing compassion you have, changed yourself.

You have changed yourself your personal identity is immersed your personal identity is lost your group identity has become your inter subjective state of selfhood that is you believe the entire group is you and you belong to the entire group. So there is no distinction between you and the group to which you belong. Suppose your family you do not in a family you do not belong that, you are just a member you develop an inter subjective state of self-hood where you believe you means your family.

So if you look at this picture then you will find that empathy compassion and self-transcendence are something which is just about belongingness. But if you do not have belongingness then in such case what happens you develop apathy loneliness and melancholy. The lowest point is of course melancholy is depression that if you are not attached to anybody, if you are not attached to anybody it is because of loneliness because you feel that you do not belong to anyone.

And before that of course if you have develop apathy it means you do not develop any kind of sympathy apathy antipathy with anyone. So belongingness comes in the middle of it the higher order things the higher order, needs are empathy compassion and self-transcendence the lower order needs are apathy loneliness and melancholy. So with this concept we will go to the next idea of how and why intimacy matters to all of us.


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Intimacy matters...

- Belongingness helps us 'read' others, allows us to develop empathy
- Empathy gives rise to compassion, creates intimacy
- Intimacy generates reciprocity for mutual care

It is an investment...requires work & commitment



Source: Getty image



Now if I belong to someone a particular family a group a community a party what happens it helps us to read others better. In a family you read all those social clues or cues which are, available with your family members much better than what a stranger who actually does not belong to your family can identify. Of course if those clues are very distinctive then people can understand even if they are not party to or a member of that particular group.

But if you belong to that particular family or if you belong to that particular group then you can read certain subtle queues, or close very easily. Therefore you can read others and that reading helps you develop this empathy. Because if a member of your family supposes your friend your mother your child your brother is in pain you can understand how much pain your brother or sister is currently enduring.

So it helps you to read others better and of course since you develop empathy you also find yourself ready to help, others assist others. You feel that there is a sense of pain with a degree of connectedness a degree of togetherness that creates intimacy. Because when you actually belong to others when you try to assist others in their difficulty you develop some kind of attachment or intimacy as mother and child often develops it.

And this intimacy in turn generates a reciprocity so this reciprocity ultimately, becomes a glue for social connectedness for mutual care and for that one has to invest this belongingness does not come just like that it requires work it requires commitment. So whosoever is a family member has a particular role to play they just cannot belong to a family without belonging to the family ethos. That belongingness requires as I said investment in all kinds.

Therefore my suggestion is, that if we really want to belong some with someone we need to develop empathy and compassion and then it will give us intimacy and this intimacy will result in some kind of I mean reciprocity which will give us the mutual care for each other. But the question is if we do not belong to someone what will happen?


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Alienation

*The feeling of NOT belonging to the community,
results from an inability to express oneself honestly.*

This may result in...

- Social isolation
- Norm-lessness
- Meaning-lessness
- Power-lessness



Source: Getty image [unsplash]

Now this is the concept if we do not belong to someone what will happen this is called alienation, alienation is not belonging to the community you cannot express yourself if you are alienated. If you do not belong to a particular group, class, community, party for example if we are in a classroom where many students are sitting together. But if you feel that you do not belong to them you will still feel alienated isolated.

And not only physically emotionally not proximated at all so, the question is, either we belong or we develop alienation. Now belongingness is a fundamental need some people develop alienation because they fail to adopt they fail to find meaning out of the belongingness with whatever group we are referring to. In that process they develop social isolation they cannot mix with everybody they develop normlessness because every group has a particular norm.

And that norm one has to, abide by and that is what is called adaptation and then in that process you also find meaninglessness that you belong to a group and you do not find any meaning out of it. But belongingness for example does not mean that you will be benefited all the time through belongingness. Belongingness comes not only through reciprocation of getting attachment and connectivity also by sacrificing.

So if, you do not understand that you belong some to some particular group for example and family if you are not having this makeup psychological makeup then you will find meaninglessness. And if you are meaningless then you are powerless as well in that group nobody is going to trust you nobody is going to believe you. Put together alienation is a symptom a condition where you are devoid of any kind of, belongingness.

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Outcome of alienation

- Alienated people are perceived as being different from other members of the group
- It creates conflict between social & personal demands
- It brings low self-esteem and depression, sense of insecurity, withdrawal, irritability, & self-pity

Now if you are alienated if you are not belonging to a particular group what will happen? Alienated people are perceived as being different from other members of their group they are physically proximated they may be all sitting at one particular place. For example in a classroom one person one student we may find that is alienated just not because of the fact that he or she, is physically distanted.

But by his nature and behavior because the person believes that he is or she is not belonging that particular group not having the eye contact not having the current the connectedness or reciprocation which is minimally required in order to develop belongingness. Therefore they find it the person who are alienated find it difficult to resolve a conflict between social and, personal demand.


The personal demand for a alienated person may be something else that they would remain isolated not meet with people. But the group in which you belong to may be having a different demand so when there are 2 opposing motives of equal strength conflict comes up so the social demand is approaching and the personal demand is avoiding. So when approach and avoidance are of equal, strength but in opposite nature then it creates conflict.

And that conflict creates low self-esteem depression sense of insecurity withdrawal irritability and self-pity. So it is important that we find some kind of connectedness with people in order to retain our well-being.

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Do we need to unlock belongingness?

- Do we already belong to each other?
- Are we attached to each other bio-instinctively?
- Why do we indulge in senseless act of beauty?



Source: Getty image


Now question is do we need to unlock belongingness this question I initially raised with you. If it is biologically ingrained, if it is already with us as a trait in human system then do we need to unlock belongingness. Question therefore do we already belong to each other that is do we already have a trait implicit in us we simply need to trigger it through certain social signals. Then if we are attached to each other are we bio instinctively attached to each other.

That is there are certain biological markers as well not, only it requires social signal there are already certain biological markers for it. And then why do we unnecessarily resort to some kind

of random act of beauty or random act of kindness if we do not belong to each other. You will find that when children play in a ground with I mean something in their hand or in their feet you will find that they easily get attached to each other.


When you belong to, a particular community you find that you automatically get attached with each other you do not try to derive a material benefit out of it. The moment you find that you are getting meaningfulness you get attached to each other. So we will try to understand whether there is a biology behind it or not.

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How do we justify such non-premeditated acts?

- People donate bone marrow to people with leukemia
- At great risk to themselves, they pull people out of burning house
- Soldiers throw their bodies to save their comrades
- They jump into river to save people from drowning



Source: Getty image



Now before we do that I will try to justify this random act of kindness or I mean the senseless act of, beauty. You must have noticed that people have been doing all kinds of kindness activity for reciprocation in a implicit manner. They do not really want an immediate reciprocation now when such kind of researches were done by red cross society. They found that if people are requested to volunteer for blood donation majority of the people will come without a motive.

But if you offer some, value to them for example 100 rupees for a thousand rupees for giving one unit of blood you will find that the attendance become much much thinner. That is you reciprocate in terms of material not in terms of belongingness. I have given some more example people donate blood bone marrow I mean for those who are suffering from leukemia it is a very painful process donating bone marrow.

And you if it is, for no reason if it is for a purpose of belongingness then you are more prompted to do that but if you are offered money probably you will try to avoid it I have just given an example of blood donation by red cross society. You must have found that at great risk to

themselves people pull out of the burning house soldiers throw their bodies to save their comrades.

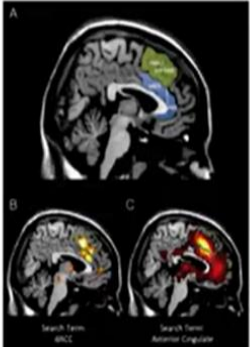
I mean they do not think twice, about their own personal safety and security they jump into river to save people from drowning. Lot of such things we have been saying on a everyday basis what does it mean? It means we already belong to each other you must have seen the photograph that I am showing you that well there is a race for handicapped children and lot of people have been volunteering to do that.

So as long you give a, social signal of volunteering you will find that belongingness as a need will come into fore. But the moment it is replaced with certain material benefit you will find that the sense of belongingness goes down.

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Social rejection vs Physical pain

- A closely intertwined system
- Anterior cingulate gyrus is activated in both cases
- The pain of rejection similar to physical pain (R. Covin: *'The need to be liked'*)



<https://www.amazon.in/Need-Be-Liked-Roger-Covin/dp/0986957801>

I will give you a biological explanation as I have been saying that are we attached to each other bio-instinctively. Now the interesting fact is that by doing a functional MRI research which, is functional magnetic resonance imaging kind of research. We have found that social rejection and physical pain they are located in the same place. That is if you do not belong to someone some group, some society, some family, some party the if you are socially rejected then it is as good as physical pain and the same brain area is affected by it.

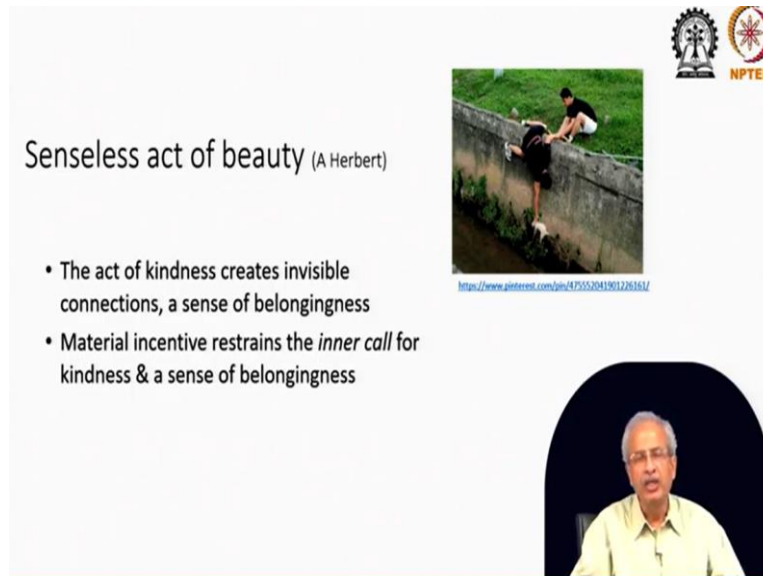
Its anterior cingulate Gyrus is activated in both cases, it is a very interesting finding by someone called Mr. Covin 'the need to be liked' is a paper which is published in the science. And this paper suggests that the locus for social rejection and physical pain is the same it means if we do

not belong to a particular group a family a particular person. If we do not have the kind of membership through which we can develop connectedness.

Then we actually experience it like a physical pain it may not be just somatic complaint or pain but is as good as physical pain. Now such researches are done using functional magnetic resonance imaging you have been asked to imagine certain situation where you are socially rejected. It is found that the metabolic activity in the brain in anterior cingulate Gyrus which is a limbic system of the human brain, at the base of human brain which is more of a subcortical region at that place there is an activation.

And that activation that you see in the red and yellow is the area where actually it takes place so you may understand very easily now that the pain of rejection is very similar to physical pain.

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The slide features a title "Senseless act of beauty (A Herbert)" and two bullet points: "• The act of kindness creates invisible connections, a sense of belongingness" and "• Material incentive restrains the *inner call* for kindness & a sense of belongingness". A small video inset shows two people on a grassy bank near a concrete wall. The slide also includes logos for IIT Bombay and NPTEL in the top right corner, and a circular portrait of a man in a yellow shirt at the bottom right.

Senseless act of beauty (A Herbert)

- The act of kindness creates invisible connections, a sense of belongingness
- Material incentive restrains the *inner call* for kindness & a sense of belongingness

Therefore finally I would like to tell you this senseless act of beauty is a concept developed by Anne Herbert. The concept suggests that the act of kindness create invisible connectedness that is you do not need to visibly tell or express yourself that you are trying to belong someone. It is purely invisible you do not need a material reciprocation it comes out of your inner call of kindness and it is a random act of kindness.

That is a sense of belongingness comes up when such kind of behavior is, emitted or executed. So people already have such kind of tendencies if you look at the streets in random activities you will find. That well some people have been trying to help some people in some way not that everybody has been doing. But the question is since it depends on the personality as well and the kind of social signal we receive as well.

Based on that actually some people develop this, random act of kindness and through that we understand that people develop more satisfaction. So giving gives you more satisfaction if you remember in your earlier class once we discussed about it whether getting something gives you more happiness or giving something gives you more happiness. We have narrated this story that giving always gives you a better sense of happiness as compared to getting.

Therefore even sacrifice gives you better happiness simply because by developing this sacrificial nature you develop belongingness to a group.

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Some cautions [S. Godfrey]

- Just believing a relationship exists does not create a sense of belonging
- A goal-directed action that only needs a minimum number of stable healthy bonds
- We don't always find more happiness from any extra relationships we may seek beyond those stable bonds

So the cautions that I have is just believing a relationship exists does not create a sense of belongingness. You may take membership of a particular group a community does not mean that you already belong to that. For example if I have taken the, membership of a particular club like lions club or a red cross society which are charitable and non-governmental organizations does not mean that I belong to that organization as well.


A goal directed action that only needs a minimum number of stable healthy bonds means that you do not need to do too many things in order to ensure that you are belonging to a particular group. To ensure your, belongingness you need to do certain actions which are goal directed and for that a stable healthy relationship will exist in that process. Therefore to belong some group let us not try to do too many things in order to show our efficacy or self-orientation towards the act of kindness.

So we do not always find happiness from extra relationship therefore we may belong to several communities that, does not give you extra feeling to you. We seek stable bonds with certain groups with certain actions and those actions must be goal directed and they need a minimum number of stable healthy bond.

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CONCLUSION

- Belongingness helps us 'read' others, allows us to develop empathy
- The pain of rejection like physical pain
- The act of kindness creates invisible connections, a sense of belongingness



<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/crisis-after-a-long-hill-intimate-wedding-ceremonies-gain-pace-653973>

My conclusion relates to this that belongingness helps us read us read others better it allows us to develop empathy. Therefore if we belong to a group we will understand others better otherwise we will try, to understand ourselves only and that is a long drawn process. In fact if we understand others by developing this capability to read others will not only develop understanding for ourselves we will develop understanding for others as well.

We have also understood that the pain of rejection is like a physical pain so physical pain and psychological pain are almost similar. And the act of kindness, creates invisible connections a sense of belongingness.

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So with these notes I would like to conclude this talk and I have given several references and I have given 2 books to you as well the power of belonging and the need to be liked. I would suggest you to go through some of these references and you will find that they will explain these concepts what I have just mentioned in a lucid manner, thank you so much thank you.