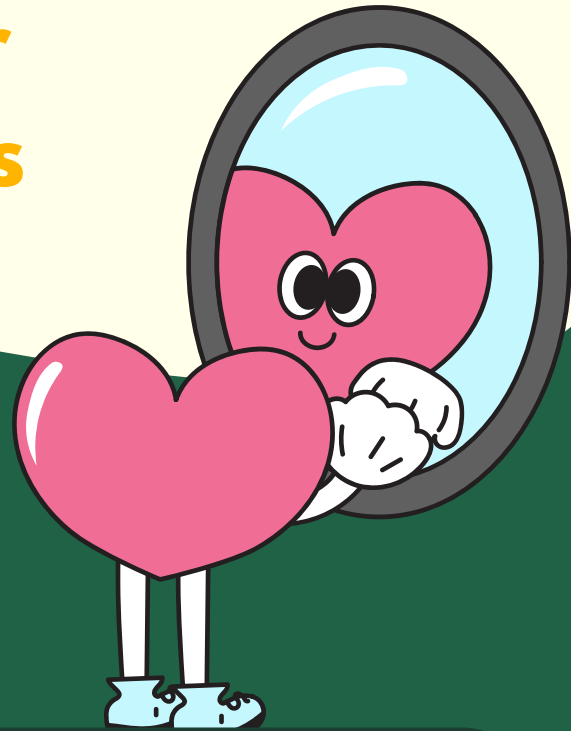


JUNE NEWSLETTER

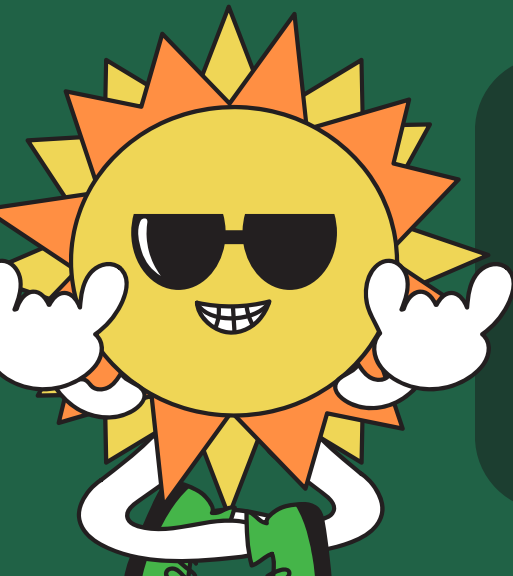
Warming into summer with social connections



First, let's understand what
“Warming into Summer with
Social Connections” truly mean?

Summer is right here on the doorstep. **Dazzling beaches**, sweet and creamy ice-creams and summer holidays are probably the main things circling your head that you are looking forward to. However, do you go to these places alone? Enjoying a fun swim with your peers or discussing what flavors to try at the new ice cream parlor over the street is definitely much more enticing to the ears, isn't it?

That is exactly why **summer** is one of the best times of the year to start cultivating **new connections** with new people from all walks of life. Sometimes **extending your hand** into the dark and pulling them back to light definitely makes someone's day or even their life.

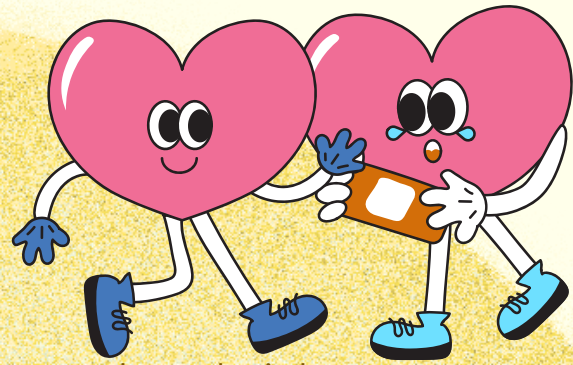


The same applies to people: if you have had an experience of **volunteering**, you must have seen the **tears of happiness** falling from people's eyes and the big pearly-toothed **smile** that you have helped them put on. This can pretty much be applied anywhere and everywhere in your life. Whether it be **initiating a conversation**, greeting your elders or simply smiling at people would have **brightened their day**.

All in all, this **summer** is definitely one that you want to brace yourself for, and I am pretty sure it is one that you will enjoy to the core.

Value of the Month:

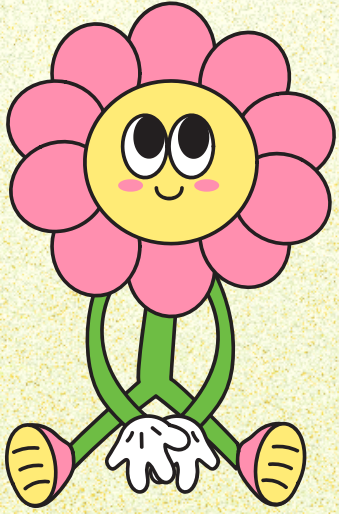
Friendship Some Practical strategies for overcoming social anxiety and building confidence in social situations.



Everyone in their life must've gone through a moment when their heart starts racing the moment they walk into a crowded room, especially when they don't recognise anyone. It is easy to focus on our goal, 'having great friends to lean on'. But for many of us, it isn't that easy due to an obstacle called Social Anxiety. **Social Anxiety** is referred to as the fear of constantly being judged or misunderstood; it certainly isn't about being shy. You can think of **Social Confidence** as a muscle, not a trait. You can train it by your experiences, by building **connections**, and filling the gap between anxiousness.

Strategies for Building Social Confidence

When we talk about having confidence, it doesn't mean that you have to be the loudest in the room. It's about the **small hints of confidence** that you show. 'Two Question' Rule: You don't have to deliver an Oscar-winning monologue. Keep the conversation natural and free flowing. Instead of asking questions that can be answered by a single Yes/No, try asking questions **open-ended questions**. "How did you celebrate the festival?" You don't need to start a party; start small and practice **socializing**. These **micro-interactions** give relief to your brain from all of the social anxiety around you. Anxiety loves to lie to us. If you stutter over a word, everyone's going to remember it forever. But the reality is that everyone dwells in themselves. They are far too worried about themselves rather than focusing on their **minor slips**. **Find A Task**: Don't just stand around in front of people; find out a task to do. Offer help while arranging the chairs, or talk to the DJ about the songs, talk to the photographer and take a few **pictures**.



Friendship Takes Time

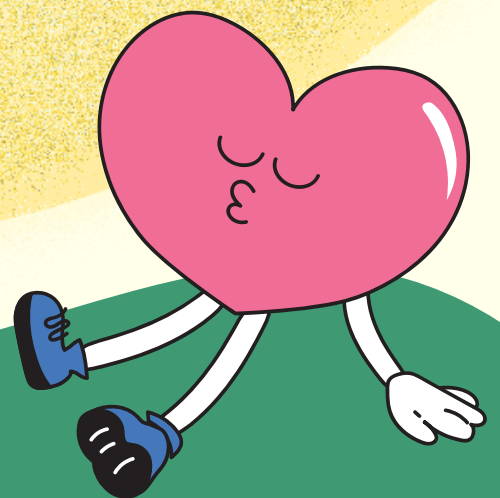
Real friendship isn't built on performances. It is built by **showing up** and **being who you are**. You do not have to change your personality to impress someone. You just have to **let the people know you**.

As we get to know more about this topic,
How do healthy friendships contribute to emotional resilience, happiness, and self-esteem?

Healthy friendships play an important role in **emotional resilience, happiness, and self-esteem**. When life becomes stressful or overwhelming, true friends provide support that helps us **cope better** and recover from **setbacks**. Just knowing someone understands you can make difficult situations feel **lighter** and **less isolating**.

Friendships also bring **genuine happiness** through shared moments, laughter, and **simple** everyday conversations that make life feel more **meaningful**. Being accepted by friends as you are helps **reduce pressure** and builds a sense of **comfort and belonging**.

In addition, healthy friendships **strengthen** self-esteem. Positive support and encouragement from friends help us see **our own worth** more clearly. Over time, this acceptance **builds** confidence and emotional strength, helping us grow into more secure and balanced individuals.



Have social media and technology made it easier or harder to form genuine friendships?

Social media and technology have **changed** how we interact with others, making it **easier to connect**, yet more **difficult** to foster **real relationships**. On the one hand, they **remove** the drawback of distance between peers and make contact easier. On the other they can **encourage superficiality and distraction**. Recent discussions about social media and friendship suggest that digital platforms **help us keep relationships alive**, **but** they can also diminish their depth if online interaction replaces real conversation.

This **dual effect is clear** when we look at how technology **helps** friendship. On the one hand, social media and technology have made it **simpler to create true connections** by eliminating distance and allowing individuals to interact **instantaneously**. Friends may chat, phone, or send updates **at any time**, making it easier to establish and **maintain ties**. This is especially important for those who **don't see each other frequently** in person since it keeps communication **dynamic and regular**.

On the other hand, however, these same technologies might make friendships appear **less authentic**. Online engagement is often **fast and superficial**, with users relying on likes, comments, or rapid responses rather than **deeper discourse**. As a result, technology may give the impression of a robust relationship without establishing the confidence and emotional depth that **true friendship** requires.

Taking both sides into account, **Overall**, social media and technology have made friendship **both** easier and harder. They help maintain contact and **overcome** physical distance, but they can also **weaken the quality** of relationships if they **replace face-to-face interaction**. Their effect depends on **how they are used**, as a support for friendship or as a substitute for it.



The Science Behind Social Connections and Well-being

In today's fast-paced world driven by **technology**, strong social connections play a **crucial role** in improving mental health and physical well-being and vice versa.

Science of social connections: It is the study of how and why humans build relationships and how it impacts our bodies, brains and overall life.

Science of wellbeing: It is the study of the state of wellbeing which is generally measured by being comfortable, healthy, joyful, emotional and social factors.

The study of social connections and well-being together give us a comprehensive understanding of **human behaviour, relationships, health, longevity, etc.** Physical and mental wellness with a **balanced** social life makes a contented life. **Wellbeing and social connections are interrelated**, and hence we need to understand the importance of both in life. If one keeps oneself physically and mentally fit, they can enjoy the social connections and live a **stress-free life**. On the other hand, if we are socially connected with friends and family, it shows a **favourable impact** on our health and mind.

The World Health Organisation (WHO)

describes social connections as: How people relate to and **interact with each other**. It has **three dimensions: structure** (the number and types of relationships and roles, and how often and how long people interact); **function** (the type and amount of support exchanged); and **quality** (whether interactions are positive – loving, satisfying – or negative – strained, conflictual, or violent).

Benefits of social connections:

WHO identifies social connection as a **primary** protective factor for mental health. It builds a **safety net** that protects against **anxiety, trauma, and depression**. Medical researchers have discovered that socially connected people often enjoy **better** physical health, a strong immune system, healthier hearts and longer life expectancy. **Strong supportive relationships** help individuals cope with tough difficulties they face in their lives, such as underperforming in a sport you're good at, not meeting the expectations set by the society, a big helping hand in decision making etc.



Suggestions for improving social connection:

In today's fast-paced world driven by technology, strong social connections play a crucial role in improving mental health and physical well-being and vice versa.

Educational Topic: Take action for mental health



Now let's address a really pivotal question:

Have social media and technology made it easier or harder to form genuine friendships?

Imagine these neural connections as roads; some roads are used every day, like your daily routine. They're smooth, familiar, something you barely have to think about. Others are rarely ever used, like a hobby you never quite picked up. These are the rougher roads, the ones that exhaust more of your brain.

Our brains have this ability to reorganise themselves, neuroplasticity, the capacity to adapt by strengthening, weakening, and sometimes forming new neural connections throughout our lives. It isn't some state you enter as most people believe it to be; it's this never-ending change where your brain adapts to the way you think, learn, and experience things.).

The scariest part of this beautiful system is that it doesn't care about your wellbeing. Your brain reshapes itself based on your habits. This means the same mechanism that helps you learn how to play an instrument can also build patterns of anxiety, addiction, or despair. When you experience trauma, your brain's threat detection system fires. Each time you relive that fear, those neural pathways activate again. Each time they do, they get stronger, making it all the harder for rumination not to take place.

However, there are ways to get out of this hole your brain forces you into. Therapy stands out as one of the most thoroughly studied interventions. By repeatedly revisiting thoughts and emotions, therapy helps strengthen healthier neural pathways while reducing the unhelpful ones.

If therapy still sounds too scary, meditation can produce measurable improvements in your mental state. You don't need to meditate for hours sitting atop a mountain to see benefits. 10 to 20 min of daily practice can reduce the brain's default tendency towards rumination.

Sleep, the most important alone time you need, isn't just recovery time. It's when your brain organises new learning and clears useless information that accumulates during waking hours. Imagine your brain as an accountant. Each night, it reviews the day's experiences, deciding what deserves a permanent place in storage and what can be discarded.

If you're trying to rewire your brain through any intervention, sleep is what allows those changes to take hold. Without it, you're asking your brain to build new roads while denying it the time needed to lay the pavement.

WORDS FOR SPOTLIGHT

Communication – Sharing thoughts and feelings with others.

Respect – Treating others fairly and valuing their feelings.

Vulnerability – Being open about your feelings.

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