



Transcript

Five Daily Helpers

# How & Why you can Connect with people to have better relationships

# Lesson #1

# Connect



## Jim Lucas

**Jim:** Hi and welcome to Lesson #1 of 5 Daily Helpers – the course that teaches you how to get the most out of life by taking 5 simple actions. Today is lesson one, which is all about Connecting.

So what do we mean? Well, when you connect, you interact with people around you. Friends, family work colleagues, partners, children, neighbours, people who work in shops, the bus driver, people at the bus stop, other parents picking up their kids from school, teachers. If you do stuff then you are always going to come into contact with people.

Although these people are there and you come into contact with them, you don't necessarily connect with them. Connection is about engaging with people in whatever way you want to try.

Now, I think this is a real challenge for some people. You'll know this if you are struggle with it. You know that you get anxious when you are around groups or one on one. You might worry about intimate relationships. You get scared you'll be rejected or someone won't want to see you anymore.

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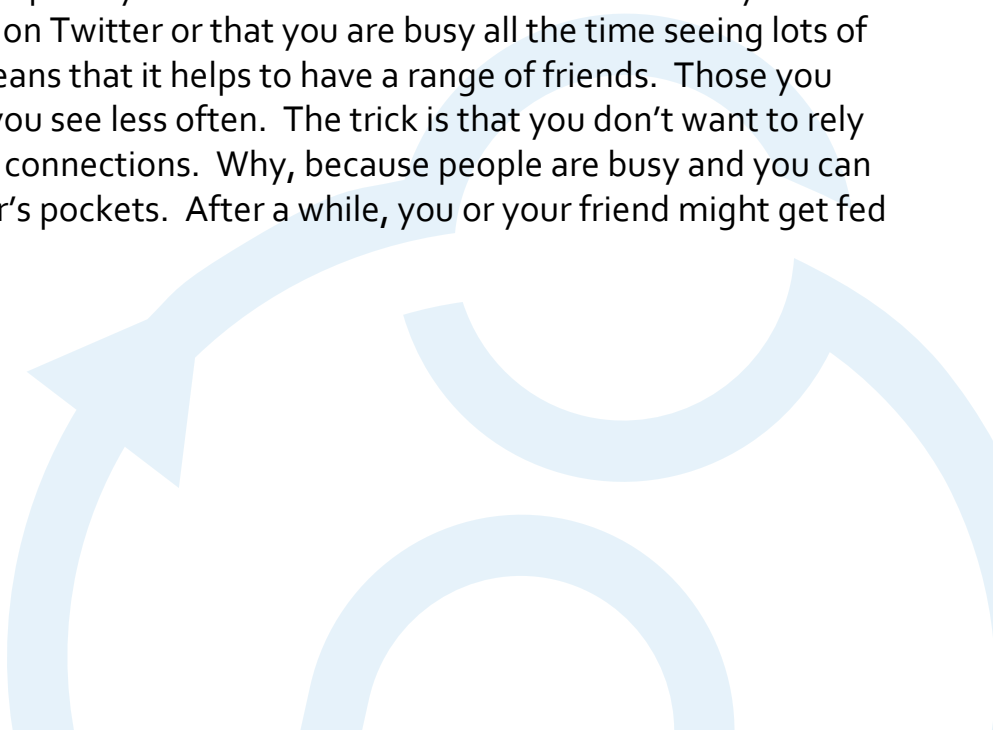
Alternatively, you might just have drifted away from others. You don't see friends or family much. You stay at home, watch TV or go on the internet. You might look at what others are up to on facebook, but you don't really connect with them that often.

Good, solid, supportive and fun relationships make such a massive difference to you and your wellbeing. It can even have a bigger impact than medication. This is what a lot of research into mental health tells us.

Anxiety, low mood, stress and even psychotic illness get better when you engage in relationships that are good for you. So what kind of relationships are good for you?

## **The Perfect Combination**

It's all about getting the perfect combination, which is two things. First it's important to have good number of people in your social network. That doesn't mean you have to have a million followers on Twitter or that you are busy all the time seeing lots of different people. It just means that it helps to have a range of friends. Those you know well and those that you see less often. The trick is that you don't want to rely on just a few for your daily connections. Why, because people are busy and you can live too much in each other's pockets. After a while, you or your friend might get fed up with each other.



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Have some variety, hang out with different people.

It is useful to make sure that you develop new friendships. A friend of mine once said that **you have friends for a reason, a season or a life-time**. I like that, because it reminds me that relationships change. It's the way life is. Some people you'll always have around. Your partner, children or family. Others you'll see less often, but they are still there throughout your life.

Then there are those you drift apart from because your lives move in different directions. Or you might just grow apart because you have different interests or different values. What you want from life takes you in different directions.

And then there are those relationships that come about because of something you do like a course, a job, a group, an NCT class, a hobby or a sport you play. You might only see them when you are doing those things together. You get on, but your relationship just exists within that context. So, if you or they stop doing it, then you don't see them anymore.

And then there are the more developed relationships you have. Those to who you are really close. These can be with as many people as you like.

A developed relationship is a closer one. Where you are more intimate. I don't just mean sexually. I mean open and honest relationships where you communicate with each other. Ones where you are prepared to let others see your fears and vulnerabilities. When you do this and others accept that, you tend to feel closer to people. You learn to trust them and they learn to trust you. It works because the openness and trust is mutually beneficial. You both depend on it.

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## **Intimacy can be disturbing**

But, this can be scary for a lot of people. Intimacy can be disturbing. Your anxiety can increase when you risk it. But the prize is worth it. You learn to feel more secure and connected to people.

It isn't without risk either. You might get treated badly. You might be betrayed or let down in some way. But that's life. You have to work through it and see whether it can be repaired. If you withdraw, push people away at the first sign of not giving you what you want, then you don't learn how to talk about stuff. You don't learn and they don't learn that it upset you.

## **The Importance of Good Clear Communication**

It is important to communicate when you are upset. It is important to say, when you did that thing, I felt really upset or angry by that. The other person may not have meant it. They might have been unaware or just in their own world. So, they need to know. The other side is that they may have known, but they didn't care enough to not do it. When that happens, you are better off distancing yourself. If they didn't care before, then they'll probably do it again. You just don't necessarily know who those people are and who they aren't until you tell them how upset you were.

So, how close do you feel to your family, friends and colleagues? Evidence shows that social relationships are important for promoting well-being and reducing stress & anxiety. The Foresight Project concluded that people feel better about life when they pursue goals that are associated with commitments to family, friends, socialising and community involvement. Goals associated with career success and material gains tended to undermine life satisfaction.

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Makes you think doesn't it? So many of us are pre-occupied with career success, promotions, working hard. When focusing more on social relationships will probably make us happier.

## **Focus on what will help**

So can you get busier by nurturing your relationships? Is this an area of your life to work on? Do you want to feel closer to people in your life? Or are you too isolated? Think about where you can increase your sense of belonging.

Maybe make it your goal to become close to those around you; for example, go for a night out with your friends or if you prefer a quieter, more comfortable setting, invite your friends over for dinner & catch up with them! You can make this a regular thing and so, end up becoming closer and closer. This will establish a real link!

Other options might be to plan a date-night or make sure you talk with your other-half in the evenings or whilst you are in bed. Plan your time-out and your down-time.

## **So, to summarise:**

1. Having supportive relationships with people can protect against suffering
2. Its helps to have a perfect combination of a wide network of people and then closer more intimate relationships
3. Being open with people can be scary, but the rewards are amazing when you discover your real friends
4. Relationships are strengthened with good clear communication
5. Take action to do something different that will help you connect in new ways



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