

Connect

We hear a lot that humans are social creatures, but we never go too deep into what that means or why it's important. The benefits of teamwork are easy to see. Early humans were able to hunt animals many times their size, able to build civilization out of nothing. This came from the biological drive to be together. We see this today in tribes of whatever people prioritize. From political party to favorite football team. The importance of connection is further demonstrated in the torture technique of solitary confinement. It is so scary for a human to be alone, we use it as a punishment. Social connection is built from the need to cope with our own thoughts.

This brings us to the question, what does another person provide us, that we can't provide ourselves? I think the answer to this question is perspective. As the holder of our own mind, we cannot understand the boundaries of it. I think there's something cyclical about the brain. We get ourselves into loops, in patterns of habits. Perspective helps break the internal cycle of thinking, allowing fresh thoughts into the brain.

The importance of this is in understanding how it's manipulated. We are in the middle of a loneliness epidemic, but there's no physical barrier stopping people from connecting. So what is it? The want for connection is being satisfied in parasocial relationships. When a fan interacts with a creator, they are tricking their brain into thinking they're satisfying this need for human connection. It's not until later, when the lights turn off, or you're in the shower, in the absence of overt stimulation you feel the void of the parasocial relationship. There is no break in your personal cycle. They talk at you, but there is no perspective on your own opinion. Your own mind loses its frame of reference. If the existence of parasocial relationships was the extent of the problem, humans should notice the lack of sustenance in these relationships and return to normal social relationships, but we don't, so we must push further.

I believe the draw to parasocial relations is the lack of rejection in the relationship. As mentioned before, social rejection or the rejection of connection is one of humans' worst fears. This aversion to rejection has spread from social rejection to rejection in general. Rejection from college, a friend on instagram, or a date is viewed as some of the worst things that can happen to someone. This makes sense when understanding this from a systemic lens. Rejection from college, or a job, can alter your ability to exist in our society. This, along with social media, has facilitated the shift of self worth from an internal metric to an external one. When value is an internal metric, a rejection turns into their loss because your value doesn't change with someone else's perception. It is important to understand this self worth issue is not a personal failure but a result of systemic pressures.

I believe this self worth issue begins in the environment of social media in the failed education system and cascades into adulthood. We see this in the new generation of adults. They are burnt out, have more anxiety, and face a myriad of mental health issues. This is affecting how they relate to their peers. We live in a world where we don't want to inconvenience our friends, allowing room for corporations to replace the work we did to maintain social connections such as driving friends to the airport or doing chores together.

The systemic forces work against human connection. The system expertly dismantles connection through commodification of attention and emotion. Expression will be replaced in every facet because human connection itself is a threat to the system. When humans prioritize our neighbors safety and well being we will fight against systemic forces. We will demand investment into education and public infrastructure. The more human connection is severed, the more desperate people will become. The humans of America are being pushed to their breaking point. We must break the cycle leading by example, inconveniencing ourselves to be good friends and partners.