



RESILIENCE BUILT THROUGH CONNECTION

BREAKING ISOLATION IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

BY LEANNE ROSE DORISH, RCC

The way we think about connecting with others has to change. Many of the ways we used to get together and have a replenishing conversation with friends have fallen away because of the pandemic, because of the floods and the landslides, and because of travel restrictions worldwide.

Screens have seemingly taken over our lives and it's not to anyone's fault. Technology has helped us stay aware, employed, and in the know. But we're having Zoom-fatigue and more headaches, backaches, less exercise, and even relationship changes. Life has shifted whether we were ready or not. Is it going to go back to resemble what we knew before? Hard to tell. Will there be a continuous level of uncertainty for the unforeseeable future? Yes. So then how do we stay interested in restoring ourselves and staying resilient?

At the beginning of 2021, a dear friend and I were chatting over the phone. We are both neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) graduate moms and have kiddos with extra needs, so dancing with uncertainty is just part of how

we exist. We were talking about the deeper isolation the pandemic continues to present for us. My friend mentioned that she'd love to have a group to talk about spirit and our boys, emotions, and the everyday struggles that come along with being a NICU grad mom. I asked some specific questions of her and then said, "Should we just start this group?"

We're now in our seventh month of chats. It is a small group to keep things personal because we wrap our arms (virtually) around each other and meet each other where we are at. Our conversations focus on the energy from the moon, the weight of the world, and how grateful we are to have each other during these times. It's a space that is filled with love, acceptance, empowerment, and new perspectives. Whether or not you have a group like this in your life, you deserve to feel held and connected to others, now more than ever.

FOLLOW THE FEELING

Sifting through social media to find a group to join or forum to chat in or webinar to listen to is time consuming and can take you down a rabbit hole. Once you let yourself land in the

What about creating my own group?

What are some signs that you might want to create a group of your own instead of joining one that's already out there? Well, it starts with a need. Whether it's a need that you have found in yourself or a need you hear others talking about. Thinking about that, you should then ask yourself a collection of questions like:

- ▶ Who would the group be for?
- ▶ What is the purpose? How could it help?
- ▶ Where would it take place?
- ▶ Is it therapeutic or supportive?
- ▶ Do I want to lead or be a member?
- ▶ Do I actually have time to maintain this?

And the list goes on...

Starting your own group means you have an idea that feels powerful enough that you will commit to the time it takes to start, gather, and grow the seeds. Consistency makes a big difference these days and making sure you can show up each time is very valuable, both for trusting yourself and others trusting you enough to stick around. Being accountable takes energy and you might not have torrents of that; however, this group you are thinking of may help refill your bucket, too.

world of online adventures, you can wake up an hour or so later and find that you've accomplished very little.

The feelings of being stuck and lonely and disconnected are still present after a romp with social media and perhaps more-so because you see others "having fun" or "out for dinner with friends." Remember, these pictures are like wearing rose-coloured glasses — the publisher is only showing you what they want you to see. And honestly, if we compete with the rest of the world, we will never stay bonded with our own dreams, visions, and purpose.

Often, when I'm working with clients who are feeling really stuck and can't give me more than the "I don't know" kind of answer, I walk them through an exercise that helps them articulate the feelings that come with the stuck-ness. We "follow the feelings." This is how the NICU group began. I followed the feelings I was having while thinking about what the connection would feel like if I had a group of other like-minded moms around me to chat with, and it ended up being exactly what we all needed.

You may often forget that your feelings are indicators and reminders for growth, empowerment, and lessons. When you follow a feeling, you find answers. They usually won't be the ones you thought would be there, but if you're willing to allow whatever *wants* to come through *to* come through, then what is needed in this very moment will be the answer to guide you to the next step.

Remember, you can only take one step at a time. Resilience comes from understanding that with each step, comes new insights, strength, and joy.

BODY BANK ACCOUNT

Take a moment right now and think of the things you would like to connect with others about. Are some of the things I

relish from my women's group the same as what you are looking for or longing to have? Maybe so and maybe not. If not, what are some of the things you are wanting from your bonds and connections with others?

We, as RCCs, let ourselves fall through the cracks because we are the ones holding space for others right now. Practices are full and there doesn't seem to be an end to it. What is great for the bank account might not be great for your body, your relationships, or your spirit. You are probably constantly getting new referrals or phone messages requesting services and all the while, your family and neighbours and friends are wanting to chat because they're feeling the weight of the world on their shoulders, too. They know you are a good listener and would love to "just pick your brain." Nice, but can I send you an invoice then? I'm guessing not.

When life gets heavy, we are not taught to look for the points of pressure. Certainly, in our current state of affairs, we don't have to look too hard for them. But where are those points of pressure that are coming from within? I bet it has been a while since you have practised what you preach in session with your clients. How often do you set a boundary with compassion and tenderness with those around you so you can take time for just you? And if you could connect with others, who would it be and where would you even find them?

FILL YOUR HEART

Martina lives in Germany, has two dogs, and a garden-resident hedgehog. She loves her animals, and they bring her a great deal of joy. Yet Martina is very lonely. Life has not been easy, and experiences have left her guarded, but when she and I met back in 1998, there was an instant connection. Little did I know it was going

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to last into the present and be filled with incredible highs and rather low lows.

Martina does not like using social media, texting, or emails to communicate and so we do things the old-school way: we send postcards, letters, and small packages back and forth on a semi-regular basis. These letters and parcels hold treasures only she and I could hold dear: pictures of landscapes, garden visitors, new flowers, updates on family and old friends. We haven't seen each other in 10 years, yet the bond between us is stronger than ever. We rely on each other's snail mail surprises, and we cherish the Christmas and birthday parcels. We travel vicariously, especially in these past two years, and we honour the service people who help us keep that bond. It is all about the feelings. The thought put into these letters and packages gives each of us a sense of closeness. And it is priceless — pen pals are the best!

When you go within, what are some of the older ways of staying in touch with someone that could help you feel less lonely or fill your heart? Could it be rekindling a pen-pal partnership? You could pick up the phone and call someone instead of just emailing or texting them. Being creative with this



not only helps you think of new ways to create bonds with others, but it also allows you to remember who you are on the inside. You can then really understand who you might want to seek out or what type of group you're looking for, where the connections will be deeper and more meaningful. It's deeper when that belonging begins within.

CONNECTION BUILDS RESILIENCE

Whatever it is you are looking for when it comes to connecting with others, follow your own lead. With creative juices flowing, research if a group exists for you and question if you would feel comfortable joining. If you know you want something of your own making, look at what it involves and if you have the time, space, and capacity to start it and keep it going.

My NICU group is not a therapy group — it is a support group. I am just as much of a learner and member as the other women who join in each month. I have mental health expertise, another member has a nutritionist background, another is an energy worker, another

is a doula, and so on and so on. We come from all different walks of life and live everywhere from Hawaii to Ontario to California. This group helps me stay resilient. I find replenishment, grounding, and newness from our time together, and these are the things that I need to be more of who I know I am here to be. Distance should not stand in our way of finding our people.

Resilience through connection is essential. Just as I'm sure you have seen in your work, if you don't feel you belong to something that has meaning to you, then sensations of being lost, alone, and disconnected can be present. You have the power and ability to change that for yourself, and I know you can feel it. The work you are doing is so important and the ripples are far-reaching. ■

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