Message from Maria

Dear friends:

Do you ever have that thought when faced with a decision of going out or staying put that you’d rather stay home in your comfy clothes on the couch than to head out to some social event? So, here’s the thing....I don’t know anyone – ANYONE who can’t relate to that conflicted feeling at least once in a while. We do the whole mental dance - “Eh - I don’t feel like being social”, “There’s a show I’m into on Netflix”, “I work hard all week and I don’t feel like having to ‘try’ on the weekend as well”. Then the

Connection

The holiday season is often thought of as a happy, festive time, however not everyone feels that sense of joy and togetherness. For some, the holidays can be a lonely and desolate time of the year. Humans have an innate desire to connect and bond with others...but there are both internal and environmental challenges to doing that. In a world where we connect through our mobile devices, how do we commit to the moment we are in and meaningfully connect with others rather than through our smart phones? How do we not get caught up in comparing our reality to the carefully curated version of others’ social media feeds? Technology, specifically social media, can often amplify feelings of loneliness and despair by providing us with a false sense of connection and intimacy that is, in truth, as shallow as the screen on which those images are displayed.

Dr. Johann Hari describes how we find ourselves in this place in his best-selling book, Chasing the Scream: The First and Last Days of the War on Drugs. “The Internet was born into a world where many people had already lost their sense of connection to each other. The collapse had already been taking place for decades by then. The web arrived offering them a kind of...
counterpoint; “I know if I just get there, I’ll have fun”, “I haven’t seen my family/friends in a while”, “I know my aunt/dad/cousin/sister is counting on seeing me and I don’t want to disappoint them”, and, if you’re a regular reader of our newsletter - “I hear it’s good for my health to make these connections!”.

Sometimes the voice keeping you disconnected is harsher: “My family and friends are better off without me there, all I do is cause people pain.”

So, what’s this about? This ambivalence? The harsh self-talk? And why do some people appear to not struggle with it at all? You know those folks, they always seem to know what to say, be at ease in any room and have a myriad of invitations to fun and festive events. Well, I can tell you that much of that is an illusion. Sure, socialization comes easier for some than others...but there isn’t one person I’ve known in my half a century on this planet that doesn’t struggle with various forms of insecurity in one situation or another. The carefully cultivated social media stories may belie that statement, but one of the benefits of being a therapist is debunking the myth that others have a smooth and easy life. You remember the old saying about the grass being greener... there’s something to that. Being human is

The opposite of addiction is not sobriety. It is human connection.

During this holiday season let’s create opportunities for real human connection. Let’s be intentional in our efforts to make those connections by having meaningful conversations, asking after the wellbeing of the people we’re around and really listening to their answers. Reach out, invite a friend to lunch or out for coffee or accompany a friend in need to a meeting or a faith-based service.

If you are feeling lonely, know that there are many others who feel lonely too. Don’t believe that voice that tells you that you’re the only one suffering and that you’re not worth being around. Ask yourself, what do you need to do to make yourself feel more connected? Do you need to call a friend? Do you need to keep busy and engaged doing activities you enjoy? Let’s commit to pulling ourselves away from our screens this season – there’s a lot going on right in front of us that’s worth being present for. Coping with loneliness looks different for everyone and you may have to stretch and risk a bit to make those connections. Let’s try to together!

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Interview on WZBG

Please click here for a link to the audio recording (it’s about 10 minutes) of an interview with Donta Gorham, our Clinical Case Manager. As many of you know, we choose a theme each month that relates to prevention, recovery and/or community. This month’s focus was on the power of connection. Donta’s story is an incredible illustration of that journey. Please give yourself the gift of listening – it is very well worth your time.
messy, it’s painful at times, lonely at times and… really exceptionally beautiful at times. So please know this – you don’t have to believe all your thoughts and you can change your inner voice. Be kind to yourself in those moments of doubt and fear. And it’s okay to stay home – sometimes. But those life sustaining connections are so vitally important to our wellbeing – it’s worth the push past your discomfort. YOU are worth the push.

I wish you all a very happy, healthy, holiday season filled with beautiful, meaningful connections.

Maria

““The opposite of addiction isn't sobriety. It's connection. It's all I can offer. It's all that will help [you] in the end. If you are alone, you cannot escape addiction. If you are loved, you have a chance. For a hundred years we have been singing war songs about addicts. All along, we should have been singing love songs to them.”” — Johann Hari