

## Science sheet - Social Connection

### Summary

Social connection is a primary need in the brain, and we can't survive and thrive without the understanding and cooperation of others.

We automatically categorise new acquaintances into friend or foe based on how similar we perceive them to be.

Helping others and acting pro-socially creates a reward response in the brain.

Social connection drives teamwork, empathy and trust.

Social connection and in-group identification across the business drives engagement and energy.

### Building a socially connected team

Providing a socially connected, stress free, equitable work environment creates better performance and happier people. Check your approach as a leader:

- + Do you have cliques within the team? Who's in the in-group and who's in the out-group? What would bond people across these divisions? Have you created shared goals? What else could you personally change to role model 'one team'?
- + How focused are you on the relationships between team members? How do you create co-operation, harmony, and shared pride in their work?
- + How does your leadership style contribute to a sense of reward? How might you be creating a sense of threat?
- + How do the policies and systems, culture and practices in the company manage stress and create a positive mood?

### Next steps for you

Use the tool to assess your team or access our on line Social connection self-assessment

<https://www.headheartbrain.com/social-connection-questions/>

Create a new habit of taking time to connect socially

Reward people for helping others

Reward people socially (praise and social recognition) for volunteering and teaching others.

Introduce social rewards like teamwork, increased social standing support from others.

Monitor the levels of social connection in your team.

### Further reading and viewing

Matthew Lieberman, *Social: Why our brains are wired to connect*, Oxford University Press, 2013

The social brain and its superpowers: Matthew Lieberman, Ph.D. at TEDxStLouis  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNhk3owF7RQ>

Warneken & Tomasello, *Experiments with altruism in children and chimps*, The Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-eU5xZW7cU>

Daniel Pink, *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us*, Riverhead, 2009

RSA Animate, summary of Dan Pink's *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6XAPnuFjJc>

Alex Pentland, *How social networks make us smarter* (TED Talk):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAGBBt9RNbc>