

Connecting to people starts with listening

By Mandy Kendall

I have to admit (in a very un-British way) to being very excited. We had the first meeting of the South Lake Tahoe Health Connective this week and, well, I thought it was great.

A group of like-minded natural health practitioners, passionate about their work, meeting to connect with each other and figure out ways to better serve their patients and the whole community. Personally, I don't think it gets any better than that.

So, making connections has been forefront in my mind this week and I decided to focus this week's piece on the aspect of life that we all deal with every day – connecting with people.



Mandy
Kendall

Some of the time it happens without us even being aware of it. We interact with family, friends and co-workers automatically. We know them, they know us and it's what we've done all our lives. Then there are occasions, like meeting someone for the first time, when we are very conscious of the act of connecting. Do we like them? Do they like us? What will they think of me? What do I think of them? Apparently, when we meet someone for the first time, we decide, fundamentally, whether we like them or not in about 3 seconds. Not much time to make

a good impression, is it?

So what do we do to make a good impression? Well, to be brutally honest, in general, human nature tends to lean us all toward the “what’s in it for me?” school of thought as we go through life. (I think it must be a survival thing.) We are not necessarily being selfish. It just seems to be the way people work.

So, how do we change that bias when making connections? How do we make sure we are making the best connections possible with the people who are right for us?

Here are my thoughts, and *Qwik-e* tips, on how to help make those connections special:

Listen – Just let someone talk and when they’ve stopped talking ask them something about themselves. See how long you can get them to talk without them being able to ask you anything about you. You might find out things about them you’d never known before.

Be interested – Once you’ve listened to what they have to say, let them know you’ve heard and understood them. Affirming what someone has just told you is a great way to let them know you care. If they return the interest, and ask you about yourself before you’ve had a chance to tell them, then you know you have a genuine connection on both sides. If they only talk about themselves, well at least you know how this relationship is likely to pan out.

Start slowly – Think of it as a bit like dating. No one really wants to reveal too much about themselves too quickly. (There’s that survival thing again.) You start with small talk and move on to more intimate things as the relationship grows. After all, you would normally have a few dates before you get engaged. Ask someone what interests them, what makes them tick (this doesn’t need to be with someone you’ve just met either, it’s amazing what you can find out about the people you think

you know just by asking).

Make them feel special – Just taking the time to listen will make someone feel pretty special, but if you want to go the extra mile just tell them how much you've enjoyed talking with them, even if they haven't asked you a single question.

Be present – In today's fast-paced world it is easy to end up trying to do two or more things at once. But we all know how frustrating and, let's be honest, downright disrespectful it is if someone is half-listening to us while they are trying to do something else as well. If someone is important to you, then they deserve your full attention. If it's not possible to give them that at that moment, then be honest and say, "I'm sorry, I really want to hear what you've got to say but I have to (fill in the blank) right now. Can you give me 5 minutes and then you'll have my full attention?" Who could get upset at that?

Until we connect next time.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe. If you have any questions, feel free to drop me an email at healthconnective@gmail.com, visit us on Facebook, or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.