

Attraction and Rejection (Part 2)

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2.0 The Need to Belong

Why is social attraction important? Forming bonds is a big part of human life. Social animals (including plenty of nonhuman ones) survive and reproduce mainly by way of their relationships with others. In order to survive, it is vital to form and maintain some relationship. Forming relationships involves securing acceptance, which often depends on getting others to feel and think positively about you.

People survive and reproduce better if they have relationships, but that doesn't mean they only want relationships for those reasons. Most likely, the "need to belong" is a powerful drive within the human psyche, and it affects people who are neither worried about survival nor urgently interested in reproduction. People who didn't care about being with other people probably didn't do as well as those who formed strong social networks, and the need to belong helps make people want to form those networks. To enjoy the benefits of culture, people have to have an inner drive to connect with other people.

Psychologists believe that simple contact or social interaction with others is not enough to fulfill this need. Instead, people have a strong motivational drive to form and maintain caring interpersonal relationships. People need both stable relationships and satisfying interactions with the people in those relationships. Abraham Maslow and other theorists have suggested that the need for love and belongingness is a fundamental human motivation. According to Maslow, all humans, even introverts, need to be able to give and receive affection to be psychologically healthy.

The universality of the need to belong was once aptly summarized by social psychologist Warren Jones (1989), who was presenting an overview of his research program on loneliness. "In two decades of studying loneliness, I have met many people who say they have no friends. I have never met anyone who didn't want to have any friends". Converging evidence from other

sources casts doubts on the stereotype that some people are by nature loners or are indifferent to human social contact. True, some people may want many friends whereas others are content with just a few, but everybody needs somebody. Full deprivation of interpersonal contact is extremely stressful for everyone. It is said that prisoners at San Quentin who were sentenced to solitary confinement and no communication with each other resorted to desperate measures just to achieve some connection with other human: Many of the men learned to speak down into their toilets, so the sound could pass through the pipes into other cells. they generally did not know who they were talking with, probably could not communicate very effectively, and might not have much to talk about and the prospect of talking, with your head stuck inside your toilet would be off-putting to many but it was worth it to them just to hear another voice and know that their was heard. if the only road to social acceptance requires putting your head into a toilet, many people will do it.

Talking to toilet may seem bizarre to you, or outside your realm of experience. More commonly, you probably know people who rely on the Internet for much of their social life and social contact. The Internet allows people to interact with strangers and feel as though they can form social connections without much risk or anxiety (McKenna & Bargh, 1998, 1999, 2000). Some people manage to satisfy the need to belong by spending time in Internet chat rooms, where they may have intimate conversations with other people. some who suffer from social anxiety or have feeling that society rejects and stigmatizes so that opening up face to face with people they know is threatening, even dangerous find they can communicate about their inner selves with complete strangers under the safe protection of anonymity that the Internet offers.

Talking into toilets is just one extreme and vivid instance of how hard people will work to connect with others. The long road to social acceptance has been shown in variety of ways in which people strive to gain acceptance and the variety of ways they suffer when they fail to connect with others. Nobody wants to end up all alone in the world; in fact, most human beings could hardly survive by themselves. Remember that people work long and hard to secure acceptance by others and to avoid rejection.

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