

# WEEK 1: Lean On Me

***Cellular biologist, Dr. Bruce Lipton, argues that rather than 'survival of the fittest', humanity's best survival strategy is unity.***

To some degree, over the past 18+ months, we have realized that relationships are an integral part of our wellbeing. We are built for community; to be emotionally and physically connected with others — to belong.

Dr. Lipton's theory is supported by the longest running study on human development in history. For over 75 years, Harvard University has tracked the lives of 724 men, exploring everything from physical and psychological traits to social life and IQ to best learn how we flourish. Key results showed that happiness and health aren't a result of wealth, fame or working hard, but instead, come from our relationships.<sup>1</sup>

## ***How relationships impact our happiness and health***

People who are more socially connected to family, friends and community are happier, physically healthier and live longer than people who are less well connected. On the flip side, loneliness is toxic. More than 1 out of 5 Americans, at any given time, will report that they are lonely.<sup>2</sup>

Loneliness is a warning signal for our body, and if ignored, can shift us into survival mode. First, cortisol, a stress hormone that keeps us alert to threats, will increase. Also, in preparation to heal any injuries, we might incur while alone, our overall inflammation will increase, which impacts hunger signals and slows down metabolism, leading us to eat more and burn less calories. Inflammation has also been linked to increased insulin resistance, which increases the risk of diabetes. Sleep is also affected as it becomes shallower so that we can easily wake to potential dangers during the night.

### References:

1. Mental Health Foundation. Relationships in the 21st century: The forgotten foundation of mental health and wellbeing. (2021).
2. Robert Waldinger: What makes a good life? Lessons from the longest study on happiness | TED Talk (2015).



These survival modes may be helpful for us to get through short, threatening bursts of isolation, but the longer we are lonely, the longer those changes have a domino effect on our health. The wear on our cells and organs increases our risk for mental, physical and emotional problems, such as weakened immune systems, higher blood pressure, and a significantly higher risk of developing certain diseases.<sup>1</sup>

To avoid this toll on the body and instead flourish, consider the wisdom learned and shared through Harvard study director and psychiatrist Robert Waldinger in his TED Talk titled, "What Makes a Good Life?"<sup>2</sup>

1. ***Social connections are really good for us.***
2. ***The quality of your close relationships matter.***
3. ***Good relationships protect our memories and brain, as well as our bodies.***

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## CHALLENGE

**Cultivate positive interactions every day.**

**"There isn't a time, so brief is life, for bickerings, apologies, heartburnings, callings to account. There is only time for loving, and but an instant so to speak, for that." ~Mark Twain~**