

# Communication and Connectedness against Depression and Anxiety

Christian Jonathan Haverkamp

**Abstract**—Connectedness with others is an important criterion for mental health. While understanding the underlying content and dynamics is essential, connectedness with others can help reduce anxiety and depression. In addition, external connectedness requires internal connectedness.

**Index Terms**—connectedness, communication, depression, anxiety, treatment, psychotherapy, psychiatry

## I. INTRODUCTION

CONNECTEDNESS is a feeling of belonging and affinity. At the same time, it tells us about the depth and quantity of meaningful communication between individuals. It is also a state of linkage with another. The author has shown that this feeling can be of significant therapeutic value (Haverkamp, 2000, 2018a, 2019). Very often, in anxiety and depression, patients feel disconnected from the world and themselves. This frequently leads to a vicious cycle in which greater feelings of separation lead to even more disconnectedness. Interpretations of internal and external interactions or non-interactions with the world often cause depression and anxiety. Meaningful information flows underly any change in the world and are crucial for the individual's well-being. The further one is cut off, and the assessment of reality is from one that would be helpful to the individual, the greater the space for anxiety and depression. How we think and act is directly influenced by our interpretations of past communication events or communication that did not occur.

## II. CONNECTEDNESS WITH OTHERS

A need to build connectedness is something we are born with. Every cell of every living organism is connected with

other cells in the organism for survival. At any level of observation, from the molecular to the social, communication keeps alive and supports adaptive change. Throughout our life, we interact and build communication pathways with other people. Meaning is encoded not only in the spoken word but also in the many different ways communication is practised. We connect all the time with our outside and our inside worlds. When our connection comes from a place within us that is authentic and open, the depth of our connectedness will be greater. Much of the connection with others comes from what we feel others value than what we truly value ourselves. This misalignment can lead to anxiety, depression, burnout, and other conditions.

The level of connectedness determines how well we interpret another person's communication. It is essential for understanding. The level of connectedness also determines how much information can get through. Since most of our communication is non-verbal, a large amount of communication occurs subconsciously. Communication involves encoding and decoding, which depends on our 'coding table', the assumptions we make. Since the interpretations we made in the past can become entrenched and be associated with various emotions, they are unlikely to change, unless we actively try to do so. A reinterpretation of our memories and current interactions brings about change in therapy.

Emotions, such as fear, affect how we interpret our interactions with others. If one is already fearful, one is more afraid of what the other may think or say. Any resulting misinterpretations influence the interaction, affecting how they interact with us. Identifying where these emotions come from and what they are trying to signal is necessary for working with them long-term. Emotions are neither good nor bad. They are signals that need to be decoded to resolve the issues they are pointing towards.

We know from attachment theory that something as basic as the communication patterns between mother and child can influence how safe an individual feels in the universe. The falling apart of families and wholesale distancing from

Jonathan Haverkamp, M.D. works in private practice for psychotherapy in Dublin, Ireland. The author can be reached by email at [jonathanhaverkamp@gmail.com](mailto:jonathanhaverkamp@gmail.com) or [www.jonathanhaverkamp.com](http://www.jonathanhaverkamp.com). Copyright © 2022 Christian Jonathan Haverkamp. All rights reserved.

meaningful religious practices, coupled with materialism and physicalism, has disconnected many people from practices that have given them a sense of safety in the past. Relationships with parents or co-workers who already feel overwhelmed and stressed by everyday life's complexity and material goal-directedness have become more fragile and less reassuring. As a result, we may look for feelings of being held and protected in business success or academic achievements. Still, they don't provide the *feeling* of security because that is not what they have been designed for. Deep connectedness with oneself and others can reverse this process and lead to authentic feelings of basic safety. However, several social forces act against this connectedness, resulting in numbing loneliness, which can lead to depression and anxiety.

To reconnect with others, we need a connection with ourselves on a fundamental level. It means identifying what we really need, value, and aspire to, three factors which I have dubbed the 'three basic parameters' previously (Haverkamp, 2017a, 2018c, 2018b). We may think we know them, but often we only see the indirect and more superficial ones rather than the deeper direct and authentic ones. For example, one may think that one needs to make a lot of money, while the safety this money brings is the deeper target. This misunderstanding of one's needs, values and aspirations can lead to a sense of instability, not only within ourselves but also in our communication with other people, when we may not know what we truly want from them. We may also misread them when we project our misinterpreted needs, values and aspirations onto them. Understanding our own basic needs, values and aspirations better and connectedness go hand in hand. The more one understands, the less one is affected when a connection with another does not materialize. Insight, understanding, openness and connectedness go hand in hand.

### III. CONNECTEDNESS WITH ONESELF

As we have seen above, connectedness with ourselves helps us better connect with others. But connectedness with ourselves is also essential for our mental health. Once we can connect with ourselves, we feel safer and less alone, which reduces anxiety and feelings of depression. As little children, connecting with others around us seemed so much easier. The reason is that thinking did not intervene as much as it does in adults. However, if thought becomes our servant, it can help us connect. In psychotherapy, for example, we train the ability to think about our thinking (metacognition), which should make connectedness easier by breaking down unhelpful thought patterns and helping us to better connect with ourselves, which facilitates connecting with others.

Our internal connection is the channel through which communication with others becomes possible. Connecting

with ourselves means being aware of our feelings with openness and little hindrance from internal unreflected conflicting information, such as in the form of memories. However, openness and transparency require courage because some of our feelings may seem hurtful and the cause of negative consequences. For example, a child can easily feel that the anger from a parent with anger issues is directed at what the child does and feels, leading the child to distance themselves from their feelings. The result is a greater disconnect from oneself, which can last into adulthood and manifest in certain situations and circumstances as anxiety and depression. The antidote to disconnectedness is an experience of greater connectedness.

Reconnecting with oneself often requires less but focused rather than more yet random information. Stillness and calm can help open to the small voices from inside. Frequently, in busy everyday life, we merely react to information from our environment, or we even escape into a flood of information, such as surfing the internet, which makes listening to ourselves difficult. The voice within is always there, but it can easily get drowned out by daily life. The solution is, of course, not to avoid day-to-day life but to find the places, situations, times, and people that can facilitate focusing on the information from within. For example, a job where you get lost in the moment can help you reconnect more with yourself. Gaining insight into oneself does not mean that we end up in loops of ruminations, but that new information becomes conscious, often accompanied by a *feeling* of understanding.

Many maladaptive life choices, which can potentially lead to burnout, depression and anxiety, result from an internal disconnect. From anecdotal experience, one can also speculate that internal dissociation can also lower the threshold to commit antisocial acts because empathy requires the ability to connect with others meaningfully, which in turn necessitates a significant level of internal connectedness. Following guidelines, such as ethical norms, which arise from inner exploration rather than external pressure, can lower stress, anxiety, burnout, and depression. For example, burnout often occurs when an individual's values and needs do not align with the perceived expectations of oneself for an extended period. Usually, there is reduced insight into one's actual values in these cases. The values one operates on should align with the true values one holds. As noted above, this often requires looking deeper at one's basic parameters. At the core, we naturally share most of these parameters with others. Whether this is more due to nature or nurture may be a moot point, if we consider that nurture is an emergent property of nature.

Communication with others facilitates connectedness, and connectedness facilitates communication. In the company of other human beings, one learns about oneself. This is not to say that life follows a straight trajectory. There can also be

traumatic experiences, such as rejection or mistreatment by others, and it is vital to work through them in therapy. As long as the result is greater insight, negative experiences can teach us something about ourselves, even though negative experiences are not needed for insight. On the other hand, if there is too little insight because of a lack of internal connectedness and communication, negative experiences can trigger a vicious cycle. The lack of discrimination between the other person's internal issues and responsibilities and one's own frequently leads to the mistaken conclusion that one is the other person's target, although it is the other person's inner 'demons' that are the actual target. The desire to protect oneself from more harm than leads to even greater distancing from other people. Less connectedness with others makes it even more difficult to see how the other's unresolved internal issues have led to a negative outcome outside one's control. Generalization can lead to mistrust of others, making any attempt to protect oneself less effective and contributing to depression and anxiety.

#### IV. HOW CONNECTEDNESS HELPS AGAINST DEPRESSION

Depression is often a feeling of being drawn back into the past while the present becomes less accessible. One may look for something in the past to hold onto, an explanation that could help to feel better now. The only problem is that the view of the past is affected by the current low mood, which leads to seeing more things that did not work out. Our longing for certainty does not allow us to see the role played by chance. However, connecting with the world means seeing it as it is, taking a step back and seeing it as an intricate and interconnected system that leads to certain results irrespective of where we happen to be or what we are doing. Psychotherapeutically, one may think of acceptance and mindfulness as tools to better connect with the world. Both have shown some effectiveness with mood swings.

Connecting with other humans is one of the main pillars of connecting with the world. Through others, we connect with life. Many therapeutic approaches include some form of social activation, and there are therapy groups that focus on interpersonal interactions. However, apart from the dynamics of interacting, there also needs to be meaning. There also must be a sense of meaningfulness in our communication with others. After all, humans are generators and processors of meaning. Seeing and feeling meaning in something motivate and provide more positive feelings; concentration and satisfaction increase when we see meaning in something. Thus, working with meaning can improve symptoms of depression, yet meaning depends on internal and external communication and connectedness.

#### V. HOW CONNECTEDNESS HELPS AGAINST ANXIETY

Meaningful connectedness makes us feel safer and better tied into the web of the world. Inner connectedness makes us feel more confident about ourselves, and external connectedness makes us more optimistic about our place in the world. The confidence that comes from connectedness is a powerful antidote against anxiety. When it feels entirely sufficient and satisfying to be ourselves, then anxiety, stress, and propensity for burnout decrease. People who are largely at peace with themselves feel less anxious. However, it does not mean giving up on achievement, but it makes achievement even more satisfying and motivating because we do it not for the result but for the journey. Doing things for future results increases stress and anxiety. Connectedness with ourselves can protect us from this dangerous pitfall. Anxiety means being caught in the future, while connectedness brings us closer to the present.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

Deficits in communication and connectedness play a significant role in maintaining depression and anxiety, which is only the beginning of a long list of mental health afflictions. Better connectedness and more efficient communication can help someone transcend mere functioning into feeling happy, satisfied and content. As discussed, connectedness also helps one identify one's basic parameters, namely the needs, values, and aspirations. Aligning the world more with them can reduce stress, anxiety and depression, and bring greater happiness, satisfaction, contentment, and success.

Anxiety and depression lead to greater disconnectedness. Breaking this vicious cycle happens through connectedness, both internal and external. Around this concept, the author built communication-Focused Therapy®. Anything that facilitates meaningful internal and external communication, including questions (Haverkamp, 2017b, 2017c), can help increase connectedness, and thus reduce anxiety and many forms of depression.

#### CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author has developed Communication-Focused Therapy® but reports no other potential conflicts of interest.

Haverkamp, C. J. (2022). Communication and Connectedness against Depression and Anxiety. *J Psychiatry Psychotherapy Communication*, 2022 Jun 30;11(2):21-24

#### REFERENCES

- Haverkamp, C. J. (2000). Communication-Focused Therapy® for Depression. In *Communication-Focused Therapy® (CFT) Vol IV* (pp. 320–339). Psychiatry Psychotherapy Communication Publishing Ltd.  
<http://www.jonathanhaverkampf.com>
- Haverkamp, C. J. (2017a). Communication-Focused Therapy (CFT) for Anxiety and Panic Attacks. *J Psychiatry Psychotherapy Communication*, 6(4), 91–95.  
<https://jonathanhaverkampf.com/communication-focused-therapy-cft-for-anxiety-and-panic-attacks/>
- Haverkamp, C. J. (2017b). Questions in Therapy. *J Psychiatry Psychotherapy Communication*, 6(1), 80–81.
- Haverkamp, C. J. (2017c). Treatment-Resistant Borderline Personality Disorder. *J Psychiatry Psychotherapy Communication*, 6(3), 68–89.  
<https://jonathanhaverkampf.com/haverkampf-cj-treatment-resistant-borderline-personality-disorder-j-psychiatry-psychotherapy-communication-2017-sept-30-63-68-89/>
- Haverkamp, C. J. (2018a). *Communication-Focused Therapy (CFT) - Specific Diagnoses (Vol II)* (2nd ed.). Psychiatry Psychotherapy Communication Publishing Ltd.  
<https://jonathanhaverkampf.com/books/>
- Haverkamp, C. J. (2018b). *Communication-Focused Therapy (CFT) for OCD (2)*.  
<https://jonathanhaverkampf.com/communication-focused-therapy-cft-for-ocd-2-2/>
- Haverkamp, C. J. (2018c). *The Basic Parameters* (3rd ed.). Psychiatry Psychotherapy Communication Publishing Ltd.
- Haverkamp, C. J. (2019). *Imagination and Therapy (1)*.  
<https://jonathanhaverkampf.com/imagination-and-therapy-1/>