

Are Today's Technologies Affecting the Meaningfulness of Our Relationships? Staying Connected through Photos

Interview with Judy Weiser by Kristen Mucci-Mosier

from: *HealthyWomen.org: Wellness-in-Practice*, July 1, 2009:

(<http://www.healthywomen.org/blogs/wellnessinpractice/2009/07/staying-connected-through-photos.html>)

KM: I'm all for social networking, especially when it leads to connecting with like-minded individuals and furthering your professional growth. But I'm still not sure how I feel about connecting with people just to add them to a long list of friends. I wonder, do we do it just to satisfy innocent voyeuristic tendencies? Does it really fulfill our need to feel connected? Does it affect the meaningfulness of our relationships? And what can we do when we want to maintain a more genuine closeness with people that don't live nearby? I turned to Judy Weiser, a psychologist, art therapist and founder and director of The Photo Therapy Center, with these questions and more. Read on for what she had to say and see her tips for staying connected through photography.

KM: How are today's technologies affecting the meaningfulness of our relationships?

JW: Even though technology has made it easier for people to connect, a recent survey (commissioned by Kodak), showed that this did not result in the quality of these relationships being any more meaningful. While most Americans reported that their network of friends has grown "wider" through technology, they were also very clear that this has not made those connections any deeper--and when nearly 70 percent say they believe there is more loneliness in today's society than there used to be, it's important to consider effects like these on emotional "wellness"!

KM: How can we deepen these relationships?

JW: In times where busy lives and concerns about money can create barriers that prevent people from connecting, preserving strong relationships becomes even more important. The findings from the survey illuminate the unique impact photographs can have in strengthening bonds by bringing loved ones and friends closer together, and providing a way for people to feel better about themselves and their lives. People can easily take action to make themselves feel less lonely and connect better with others by keeping photos of good times and loved ones nearby, and by sharing photos with others to show how much they matter to each other.

Using photos to create and strengthen connections through photos can be done in a number of ways, as the tips below explain:

Create a Picture-Perfect Environment: Decorate your space with photos of friends, family, loved ones and places you enjoy. Be sure to select photos that contain strong positive memories. Every photo has feelings and memories just underneath its surface; choosing the right one lets

you to revisit those moments again and therefore feel those same good feelings all over again.

Share Your World: The people you miss, miss you too. Let the important people in your life know how you're doing by sharing not just the special moments but the ordinary ones too. Sharing the "small stuff" can have a big impact on your relationships.

Interview Your Photo: Unlock the magic of your photo. Find the happiest picture in your collection and imagine a conversation with it. What positive message would it want you to know? How would it like you to feel? What would it want you to remember?

Break the Ice: Turn your photos into conversation starters. Behind every picture is a great story that wants to be told; it's just waiting for you to ask! Sharing your photos is like sharing your life; when others hear your anecdotes, connections are made that can last a lifetime.

KM: Is it still important to meet in person and connect with people face to face to fully feel connected?

JW: It's always good to connect face to face and to communicate with friends and loved ones in person. However, the reality of conflicting schedules and long distances means you don't always get to do this as often as you'd like to. But even if you're unable to meet up physically, you can still keep relationships nurtured by touching the people you love with photos--you can "be there" with them, even when not physically able to.

For more about Weiser, her tips and the study, click here [www.phototherapy-centre.com.]

What do you think? Do photos help you to feel more connected?