

# Lost Connections Summary

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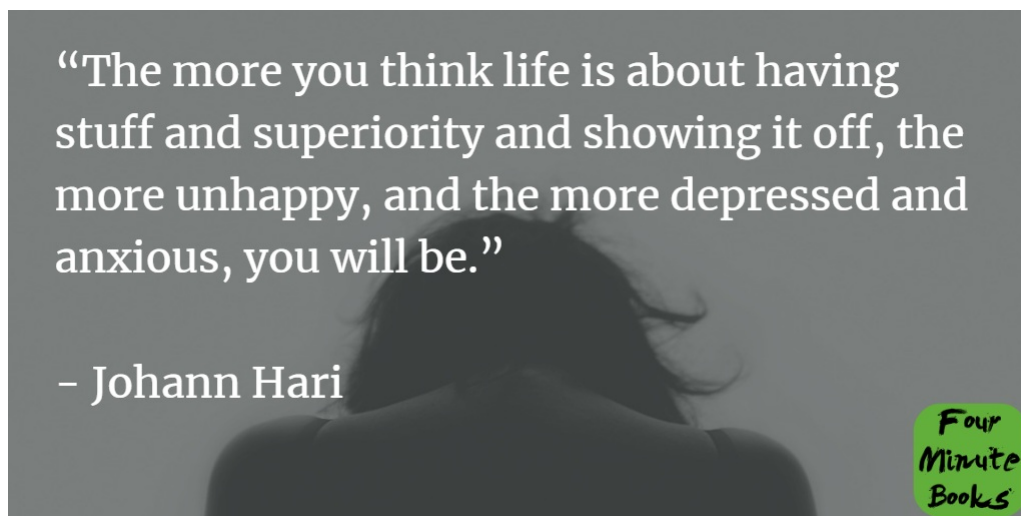


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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Lost Connections explains why depression affects so many people and uncovers the true root of it that drug companies don't want you to know.*

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



You don't have to look very far to find someone who suffers from depression. If you don't have it, you probably know someone who does. The World Health Organization estimates a whopping 300 million people suffer from depression worldwide. And those numbers only seem to be going up.

It's a huge problem, so we must have some sense of what causes it, right? There are many theories, but we don't know exactly why depression happens, or why it's becoming more prevalent. Most of us accept the explanation that it's something wrong with brain chemistry. But what if I told you this might not be the whole picture?

In *Lost Connections: Why You're Depressed and How to Find Hope*, Johann Hari explores the lesser-known side of depression and anxiety. He explores the cutting-edge science of curing people without medication. He uncovers the truth that depression isn't just a biological ailment, but an environmental and psychological one too. His thoroughly researched and fascinating argument is that the key to treating depression is in re-establishing lost connections in our lives.

I learned these 3 powerful lessons from this book:

1. Depression isn't because of a chemical imbalance.

2. There are nine main causes of depression, and they all have to do with difficult life circumstances.
3. Social prescriptions help people feel valued and connected, while medication does not.

Let's take a closer look at what Hari has to say!

## Lesson 1: A chemical imbalance doesn't cause depression.

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I know this one is a lot to swallow. And honestly, I would take it with a grain of salt. While the studies Hari presents are scientifically accurate, the conclusions he comes to may be only one side of this story. But I believe hearing this side is important.

Hari was diagnosed with depression in his 20's and began taking antidepressants. After ten years of his doctor upping his dosage to give him relief, he came to the max dosage. Still depressed, he realized he needed to try something else. Hari began his own extensive research on depression and was shocked by what he found.

Modern society has told us for years that depression is the cause of a chemical imbalance. But have we ever questioned where this idea began? After talking to researchers, Hari learned that there is little evidence that a chemical imbalance causes depression, or that standard antidepressants work.

In the '90s, a Harvard professor named Irving Kirsch looked into antidepressant research. **He discovered many antidepressants on the market were no more effective than placebos.** He was the first of many to look into the questionable efficacy behind antidepressants.

Most of these drugs are classified as serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI's). The belief is that they increase serotonin levels in depressed people to normal levels. Hari found that the idea that serotonin helps people with depression actually has little evidence to support it. This claim was likely just pushed by pharmaceutical companies.

## Lesson 2: There are nine common reasons for depression, mostly from hard life situations.

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So what is the cause of depression then? Hari's theory is that there are nine causes or disconnections, and most of them have to do with difficult life circumstances. Here they are:

1.
  1. **Disconnection from meaningful work.** Those with the least control and authority in the workplace are the most likely to have depression. We need to feel like what we do has meaning.

2. **Disconnect from others.** Loneliness and no sense of belonging are big indicators of depression.
3. **Disconnect from meaningful values.** Our consumer-driven society has left us detached from worthwhile values, which in turn contributes to depression.
4. **Childhood trauma.** This 1998 study found the more traumatic a person's childhood is, the more likely they are to have depression and anxiety.
5. **Disconnect from status.** In areas with larger gaps in wealth, such as the US, there are higher rates in depression.
6. **Disconnect from nature.** People who live in greener neighborhoods feel less stress and despair than those who don't.
7. **Disconnect from a secure and hopeful future . Native Americans on government-controlled reservations had staggeringly high suicide rates. In reservations where they had control of their own laws, elections, police, and schools this was not a problem. They had control over their destiny and were less likely to commit suicide.**
8. **Genes.** We do know that there is a genetic influence in depression, though it only accounts for 37 percent of cases.
9. **Changes in the brain.** Neuroplasticity is how the brain changes from experience. Because of this, when people spend more time with thoughts of despair rather than joy, it can strengthen the negative feeling areas.

## Lesson 3: Social prescriptions are a great way to help people with depression by helping them feel valued and connected.

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The solution for depression that Hari comes up with is a social prescription. Rather than turning to medication, doctors are starting to realize the value of social prescriptions. They help people reconnect with others around them, have meaningful work, meaningful values, and give a chance for people to overcome trauma from their past.

**In effect, social prescriptions reconnect the lost connections.**

Hari gives an example of a social prescription given to a nurse who was bullied at work and depressed. The social prescription her doctor gave was to work on a project with a small group of similarly disconnected people. Their task involved turning an abandoned area in London into a garden.

The people united and were able to find things they had in common. They could reconnect with nature and identify meaningful work that meant something to the neighborhood. All of this improved her mental health. She was able to stop her medication and started her own gardening center.

## Lost Connections Review

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While some might see the notion that depression isn't a chemical imbalance pretty radical, Hari makes it very convincing. We know that antidepressants don't work for a lot of people, so looking for other ways to help people with depression is essential. *Lost Connections* has some great suggestions for how people can reconnect and discover meaning to deal with depression.

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## **Who would I recommend the *Lost Connections* summary to?**

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The 20-year-old college student studying psychology, a 46-year-old mother of teenagers who are showing signs of depression and anxiety, and anyone who is struggling with their mental health.