

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

affectionate • relationships

LESSON-05



a CONVERSATION with TIME...

I once went to meet Time, the wrinkled old man. There he sat in the middle of a room. I walked towards the man. He looked neither warm nor cold. I listened to the 'tap, tap' of my shoes as I got closer and closer to Time. As I reached him I looked into his wizened old eyes, cleared my throat and declared, "I want it back, I want it back! You took it away from me! I want my childhood back!"

Time looked upon me, neither upset nor amused by my outburst. A gentle smile crossed his lips and he said, "That which is lost to time is lost forever."

"So never again can I experience my childhood, carefree and playful as it was?" I asked.

Time chuckled and said, "No, never again to be experienced. But my good boy! Don't look so glum, there is an option yet! Experience lives on through our memories to be enjoyed. This wall, it is a portal to the past." And with that the wall 'turned on' like a large TV as Time handed me a remote and asked, "What would you like to see first?"

I looked down at the remote and began pressing buttons, eager to playback my childhood. I press 'enter' and look eagerly at the screen...



I see a chubby, cute two year-old boy running across the screen with a young lady – my mother – chasing behind me. She finally catches me, wrapping me up in her arms. She takes me into the kitchen, sits me next to her and lovingly begins to feed me with her own hand.

The scene changes and all of a sudden it's the first day of school! My mother and father have both come to drop me off. My child-self is crying hard! "I don't want to go to school! I want to *hiccup* stay with you at home!"

I slowly begin to remember those days when I wouldn't want to be separated from my family for even a second.

The next scene begins and I am at someone's wedding reception. I'm sitting on the floor, crying into my arms because I'm lost and can't find my family. All of a sudden, I feel someone pick me up. It's my father! He wipes my face with his hands and asks, "Why are you crying? Did you think we left you here?" I don't answer, I simply push my face into his shoulder.

"Wow" I think to myself, 'I loved my family so much! I couldn't imagine life without them back then.'



The fourth scene begins. "Happy Diwali!" We all shout at each other. The whole family is wearing new clothes. We are lighting all kinds of fireworks: Taaraa-mandal, Bhint-Bhadaka, Jalebi, Kathi, 555 Bomb... My sister lights a bomb, we stick our fingers in our ears and... **BOOM!** We both fall laughing. The scenes begin to change quickly on the screen now.



My mom is forcing me to sit and study; my little sister is crying and I scoop her up in my arms; I am holding onto my older brother's finger, walking down the street, feeling confident and safe; I am crying, laughing, get angry, I am playing, and now I am sleeping next to my parents without a worry in the world.

All of a sudden, the screen shut off. I begin to think to myself...
 "How were those days? Days that were filled to the brim with love and emotions. Those days when our family was everything to me." A tear rolls down my face.

I turn to Time and ask, "What happened to all of these good times? Where did these days go?"
 Time looks at me deeply and says, "Do you really want to know?" Before I can say yes, Time presses 'enter' on the remote...

I look at the screen and say, "Oh, this is me now."

I am messaging my friend on WhatsApp. I can hear my mother yelling from downstairs,
 "Come downstairs! It's time for dinner. Everyone is waiting for you!"

I ignore her and keep chatting with my friend. She calls for me a few more times.

I stand up angrily, open the door and yell down
 "I am busy right now, mom! Just leave a plate for me..."

The only thing my mom wants is for me to have a warm meal.
 She becomes sad after hearing my cool response...



It's Diwali again. My whole family is getting ready to go to my uncle's house. I don't want to go. Everyone is convincing me to come with them. I tell them "I am going to the movies with my friends. You guys leave without me."

Scene change... What's this? I am arguing with my father. I yell, "It's my personal life! Do not interfere! Let me live my life!"
 I storm off to my room, leaving the atmosphere behind me tense.

Next scene... I am talking on my mobile with my friend. "I am so tired of my family. I feel like running away from home sometimes." I see my mom standing behind the door listening.

Standing next to Time, I exclaim, "Oh my God! I never knew my mom overheard that!"

The screen shuts off

"Time, what now? What's going to happen? Show me the future, please!"

"It doesn't work like that. The future is not in my hands, it's in yours!"

Do you want to rebuild your relationship with your family? Do you want to relive these loving moments again?"

Then the decision is yours...



“ Having someone to love is **family**,
 having somewhere to go is **home**,
 having both is a **blessing**. ”

We live at home with our family but spend most of our time with friends.

Let's see how well we know the people we spend our life with.

Q. Which is the favorite food of your friend(s)?

Q. Which is the favorite colour of your friend(s)?

Q. What is your friend's school name?

Q. Which is the dream car of your friend(s)?

Q. Your happiest moment(s) with friend(s)?



Q. Which is the favorite food of your mother?

Q. Which is the favorite colour of your brother/sister?

Q. What is your father's school name?

Q. Which is the dream car of your father?

Q. Your happiest moment(s) with your parents?



What are the results?

Most likely we know more about our friends than our family. If friends are forever, then what about family?..



How have we become
so **Detached**?



Our generation is the most well-connected in human history! On average, we have 6-8 social media accounts.^{6,7} What does that mean? We have literally billions of potential online friends. **This is great! right?**

Unfortunately, research and even our own experience shares a completely different story.

Vivek Murthy, former Surgeon General of the United States (operational head of the U.S. Public Health Service) stated,

"We live in the most technologically connected age in the history of civilization, yet rates of loneliness have doubled since the 1980s."

The General Social Survey found that the number of Americans with no close friend or confidant has tripled since 1985. "Zero" is the most common response by those Americans surveyed!

So what went wrong? We have all of this technology, we are part of so many social media platforms, and yet why do we feel so lonely and empty inside?

Dr. Bob Moorehead explained it best -

"The paradox of our times is that we have fancier houses but broken homes...we have learned to make a living but not a life."

Meaning that we have connected to nameless and faceless people throughout the world but have disconnected from those closest to us:

our family.

So, what causes this disconnect?

1. SCREEN TIME

In 2018, Americans spent more than 11 hours per day consuming media. Indians spend nearly 4 hours per day consuming media, however do not take solace in this number. There are approximately 560 million internet users in India and that number is projected to increase to 636 million by 2021.⁹

What does this mean?

Indians are on their way to spending more than half of their day consuming media within the next several years! Mass consumption of media and excessive social media usage has been critically linked to loneliness and depression within youth. We are spending more and more time with our devices and in return we are disconnecting from society and specifically from our family.

On the flip-side, spending time with family has been linked to curing loneliness and depression.¹⁰ The more time we spend interacting with our family, the happier we tend to be."

2. 'They Don't Understand Me!'

One of the most common complaints young people have about their family is 'they don't understand me!' And because of this, we begin to slowly spend less time with our family and more time with technology or our friends. *Having a good and healthy group of friends is important, but don't forget that family is forever.*

We feel as if they don't understand us, but *have we taken time to understand them?* As the saying goes – the best way to understand someone is to 'walk a mile in their shoes.'

Take a look at these scenarios and maybe we will begin to appreciate them more...

Scenario	How SHOULD they react?	How DO they react?
• When we are babies and we spoil our clothes, our parents...	"Gross! He spoiled his clothes and now we have to clean it up. How stupid is this kid? Why doesn't he clean up his own mess?"	"Oh, he is so small. He didn't do it on purpose. He will learn slowly. Let me clean him up."
• When we are kids and we break something of our parents...	"He broke it so he better pay for it. I don't care where he gets the money from but he better find the money to pay for this. Does he even understand how expensive this was?"	"He's still a child and doesn't understand the value of money yet. What is more important? Taking care of stuff or taking care of his feelings?"
• When we are kids and we keep asking the same questions over and over again...	"Is this kid an idiot? I've explained it once already and he keeps asking the same question. He seems to have a mental problem."	"He is young and curious. I should answer his questions as many times as he needs so he learns and becomes smart."



Now let's take a look at some of our current scenarios. How do we react? How should we react?

Scenario	How DO I react?	How SHOULD I react?
When I ask my father for a smart phone and my father refused...	"All of my friends have the latest phone and I have this slow piece of crap! Why can't you ever give me nice things?"	"It's okay. My phone works fine right now. And father says he can't afford a new one, so I shouldn't add to his tension."
When our parents scold us for getting bad results in school or university...		
When our parents scold us for having bad friends or about our addictions...		



'THE ROSETO EFFECT'

Roseto Valfortore is the name of a beautiful, countryside village in **Italy**. For centuries, the villagers did hard labour work in marble quarries. Life was hard and there didn't seem to be any escape from their poor economic conditions.

In January 1882, a group of eleven Rosetans sailed to New York. They eventually found work in a slate quarry. The immigrants sent word back to Roseto and convinced many villagers to come to America. 1,200 Rosetans applied for passports to America in 1894.

Soon, the Rosetans began to live near each other and created a new village – **Roseto, Pennsylvania, USA**.

A physician named **Stewart Wolf** visited the new Roseto in the 1950s and found something very interesting... he rarely found anyone under the age of 65 with heart disease. **He was SHOCKED!** In the 1950s, heart attacks were the leading cause of death in men under the age of 65 in the USA.

Dr. Wolf began to research the new Rosetans to figure out why they had very little heart disease in their community. During their research they also found that **Roseto had no suicide, alcoholism, drug addiction, and very little crime!**

So what was causing this amazing abnormality?

When Dr. Wolf looked into their diet, he found that the new Rosetans were eating much healthier than their Italian counterparts (41% of their calories came from fat). Eventually Dr. Wolf realized that the **Rosetans' good health was actually due to their family-based culture**. Rosetan families spent a lot of time with each other. They would have long meals with each other. Three generations of Rosetans often lived under the same roof.

This is called the **Roseto Effect**. It is now studied by medical students in America to show that **family and community culture can have a significant impact on one's health and wellness**.

How can I apply the principles of the 'Roseto Effect' in my family?...



Roseto, Pennsylvania, USA

Meet **Robert Waldinger**. He is a professor at Harvard Medical School and the Director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development. As a director, he has worked on the Grant Study – longitudinal study that has tracked the health and mental well-being of a group of 724 American men for 76 years.

"What are the lessons that come from the tens of thousands of pages of information that we've generated on these lives? Well... the clearest message that we get from this 75-year study is this: Good relationships keep us happier and healthier. Period... It turns out that people who are more socially connected to family... are happier, they're physically healthier, and they live longer..."

ROBERT WALDINGER

Harvard psychiatrist, Zen priest, and psychoanalyst



Watch the TED Talk here:

Project: Get-Together!



So, what now? I understand the benefits and want to reconnect to my family.
"But... how can I do that?"

Pramukh Swami Maharaj used to say, *"There is only one cure to this illness – family meetings."*

What is a family meeting or get-together? It's when a family makes plans to get together at least once a week to spend time with each other, discuss family issues, and to catch up with what is going on in each others' lives.

We challenge YOU to start this new project at your home – Project Get-Together!

Speak with your family and set a date and time for the next 4 weeks to have a family get-together.
Here are some ideas of what you can do in your family meetings...

Ask your parents how you and siblings can help them out around the house or with anything else.

Ask your parents about what life was like when they were growing up.

Sit with your parents and plan out your future. What are your goals? How can you achieve them? What are your parents' expectations?

Take out old photo albums and revisit good times you have all spent together.

Every family member shares good qualities about every other member. What do you like about your parents? Your siblings? What lessons have you learned from them?

Take out your parents' wedding photo album and go through it. Ask them questions about married life and what makes a successful relationship.

There are plenty of different things you can do to get to know your family better and build stronger ties with them.
The only question is... **ARE YOU UP TO THE CHALLENGE?!**