

# Emotional Disconnection in Relationships



Workaholics and perfectionists are people who are always on the go, like when everything is done on their checklists, and pride themselves as multitaskers. These types of people tend to be highly analytical and always seem to be tying up loose ends, preventing bad things from happening or correcting what other people get wrong.

A common thought for them: *Not everyone has the capacity to think or see things the way I do.*

People in this category often have difficulty connecting emotionally to others. **They may know logically they love and are loved but struggle feeling it in their body.** Most of their interactions are based on what they can do for others rather

than how they can connect with others. Their emotional disconnection in relationships is often part of a survival response that they are not even aware of.

## **Protective Responses**

The body scans for safety all the time outside of our conscious awareness. It does so in an attempt to protect us from emotional and physical pain. When people go through traumatic or painful experiences, the body self-protects automatically. This can manifest as fighting, avoidance and inaction. When people go through multiple painful experiences where they feel helpless, which can be common in childhood, it can leave a patterned response of emotional disconnection. Meaning, the body learns to disconnect from emotions.

## **Disconnecting from Emotions**

The human body is wired for emotional connection, but when emotions aren't safe to feel, the body often learns to disconnect from emotions all together. The positive aspect of this is that people don't feel painful emotions deeply (or at all), but the downside is that people also cannot feel pleasant emotions.

When emotions can't be felt in the body, emotions typically manifest as behaviors that are projected on others such as

anger, irritability, impatience, unlovability, resentment, and jealousy.

## **Stuck on Logical Thinking**

Logical thinkers are often praised because the world is built for people who over-achieve, analyze, think outside the box, are solution focused and are always on the go. The acceptance and praise they receive makes it more difficult for some people to be aware of how disconnected they are from their emotions.

Emotional disconnection also means people often analyze situations when they are meant to be feeling them, including when they are going through a difficult time or when someone is sharing something vulnerably. The default is often on problem solving rather than being present to their experience or someone else's.

## **Adrenaline Highs**

The body is meant to feel emotions and the body can recognize when it's not feeling them. This is why people will often seek adrenaline highs in order to feel. It's common for people to buy material things, engage in new experiences, be constantly changing things (i.e. wardrobe, travel, cars, remodeling), focus on overachieving, seek validation, or turn to things as social media or television to give them dopamine

hits.

## **Gift Giving or Doing Things for Others**

Emotional disconnection in relationships can often mean that love is expressed through gift giving or doing things for the partner. It can be difficult for disconnected people to express their love showing it words, attention, time or physical closeness. Resentment is often built when they see that others start expecting to receive love in this way from them.

## **How to Start Connecting**

The body cannot start feeling on command. The body stopped connecting emotionally because it wasn't safe to feel, so it isn't until the body learns that it's safe to feel that it will allow itself to feel again. Awareness is the first step towards reconnection.

Ask yourself:

- Do I feel pain when I go through difficult situations or when I remember them?
- Do I feel something internally when someone says something kind to me?
- In what moments do I feel the most connected?
- Do I feel empathy for others or myself?

# Practice Connection

Emotional disconnection in relationships often occurs when there are past experiences of pain. It can be challenging to practice closeness, so it is important to be patient and look for safe experiences of connection. Start exploring safe connection by relaxing your body and then resting your hand on top of a loved one's shoulder or arm and see how that feels. If you have children, give them a hug and notice how that feels in your body. Gazing into a loved one's eyes and observing their facial expressions are good ways to begin practicing connection. If these feel too overwhelming, some people find it safer to begin exploring emotional connection with pets or nature. If you are dating, this is a great time to begin [meaningful connection](#).

## Vulnerability

Most moments of deep connection happen when people are being vulnerable. If relationships haven't been safe in the past, chances are there is not space to be vulnerable. Practicing vulnerability with people you have identified as safe, can listen without judgement, validate and can hold space for your feelings can help you repair from past experiences.

People who are emotionally disconnected often have a sense of being on their own or not having support. This is

because in the past, this was often true. Learning to be independent or not count on others was a part of survival. Learning to ask for help, delegate, and build community is part of the process of regaining trust in others. Allowing things to be different than the way we are used to and becoming comfortable with things being 'imperfect' is key.

## **Apologizing**

If you grew up having to depend on yourself, you might have learned that there was something very wrong with getting things wrong. This internalized response to mistakes usually sets the expectations we have for ourselves and for how others should be, which can make it difficult to accept when we are wrong and to be kinder to others when they make mistakes. Admitting we got things wrong not only shows our capacity to be vulnerable but also builds trust in others and opens the process of repair.

## **Repair**

You will never get everything right in relationships, it's impossible. Because each person has their own interpretation of what is true and their own lived experiences, it is natural for humans to often misunderstand each other. The key to increasing and maintaining emotional connection in relationships is to know how to repair and

allow repair to happen.

Emotional disconnection in relationships can be a normal response to stressful past experiences. It is important to acknowledge and be aware of what's behind it. Then you can start developing real connection with your partner.