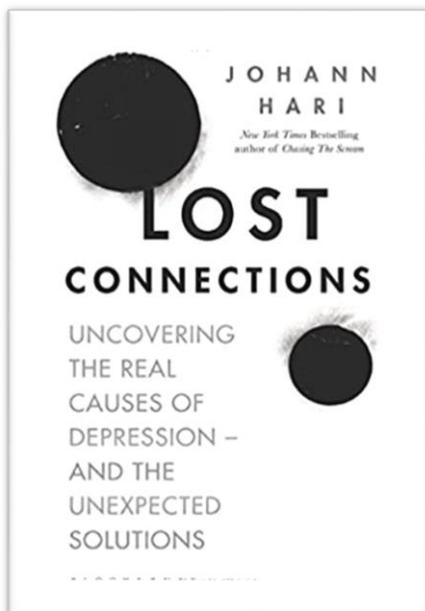




Mental Health Matters: Restoring Lost Connections

The purpose of a lockdown in a time of pandemic is to reduce social contact to reduce risks to health. This may be necessary but is also very problematic as so much of our health and wellbeing is dependent on social connections ...

John Donne's observation that 'no man is an island' ... was simply a recognition of the reality that, in health, we are all interconnected and interdependent and to break away from that is in breach with the nature of things – connections matter.



When acclaimed journalist Johann Hari set off around the world in search for the 'real causes of depression', he was motivated by wanting to understand the seemingly relentless rise of mental ill health in modern society and his own many years struggle with recurrent and disabling sadness.

He came to see depression as an often understandable human experience, somewhat like grief following loss, that was often linked to disconnection from

what we need to live well. He observed that it is natural and normal to need ... to belong, to feel life has meaning and purpose, to be seen and valued and have a future that makes sense. In fortunate circumstances there maybe opportunities to find such connections through our work, in nature, our relationships with one another and our community. But he also

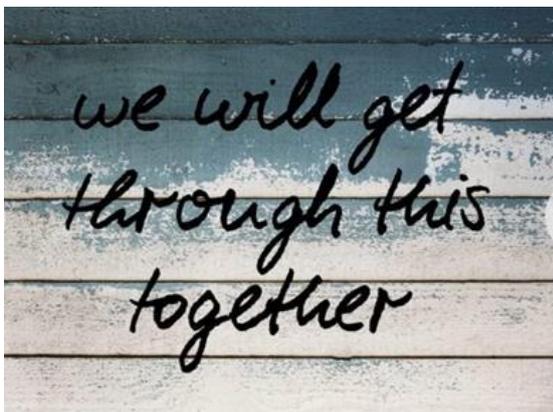
observed that modern living was full of contacts but had become increasingly disconnected and our shared culture has become less good at providing for these deep psychological needs ... And then we found ourselves in Lockdown.

His 'unexpected solutions' are as relevant now as when he wrote in 2018 and emphasise that our health and wellbeing is substantially dependant on how we live and in particular how we attend to and help one another to find, value and cultivate rewarding human connections, which includes releasing those that are toxic and unhelpful ... this can be powerfully antidepressant – but only you will know what is helpful for you.

Some may find his book a good companion or prefer to follow up the video links on his website which include a 20mins TED talk and an interview with the Guardian's Decca Aitkenhead (<https://thelostconnections.com/videos/>).

But the most important point is to simply realise, at a time of imposed disconnection, that we can do something about this and actions we can take, even small steps, in creating or sustaining healthy, hopeful, supportive connections, even whilst safely reducing contact, can have a major impact on our health and wellbeing.

Bradnich Together arose as a social movement in our community seeking to help one another ... through valuing connections ... togetherness ... do feel free to ask for help, get in touch, connect ...



All good wishes

Glenn, Kate and Sophie

For BradTog MHM

Ps. Do let us know if you have suggestions or offers to make for future postings