

Reconnecting at the Shalom Brunch

by Susan Schwartzentruber

Spring is a season of renewal and reconnection. After 3 years without a Spring Breakfast, it was exciting and rejuvenating to reconnect with each other in-person and virtually to hear from counsellors about their work at Shalom.

The global pandemic has continued to influence the wellbeing of so many people. In his article in the Harvard Business Review entitled “We Need Time to Rehabilitate from the Trauma of the Pandemic,” author David Rock describes the pandemic in 3 phases, starting with shock, then pain, and finally rehabilitation. In the pain stage of the pandemic, the author described the need for connectedness with others as a key need that was not being met. As we are moving into the rehabilitation phase of the pandemic, we are reminded of the need for patience, compassion and valuing small progress as we learn to reconnect with each other and with ourselves.

This year, we chose to focus the Brunch on the theme of connection and reconnection. The article below is drawn from the stories that counsellor Melody Leclair shared at the Spring Brunch. The article highlights the importance of connection with each other, but also reconnection with ourselves.

Reconnecting begins within

by Melody Leclair

The Webster’s dictionary defines reconnection as the act or result of restoring a connection. This presumes that a severing has occurred. You cannot have one without the other. The joy of reconnection is most realized after a period of disconnection. Many of us experienced this first-hand as a result of the pandemic and years of separation from loved ones with whom we are increasingly able to embrace.

Loss is a part of being human and happens on many levels. One of these very common but often ignored forms of disconnection is the disconnection from oneself. This can happen all at once or in fragments. It may be related to a single traumatic event or a series of events over time, or simply be the result of self-neglect.

You may be familiar with that feeling where you just don’t feel like yourself anymore. You may ask yourself “Why do I feel trapped in myself? Where did I go? Will I stay like this forever?”

Our mind-body connection is biologically wired to give us signals when it wants us to listen and learn, but sometimes we don’t pay attention. Emotions build up and we feel stuck. They begin to manifest as anger or anxiety; like a distress call signaling to us that something is off and needs attention. When people respond to this call and come for counselling, the work of healing can begin.

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Reconnecting begins within

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One of the things I love most about being a therapist is holding sacred space for individuals to learn how to listen to themselves and their lives. It is a privilege to walk alongside and support individuals to identify lost or buried parts of themselves and support them in their journey toward reconnection.

This work begins with an awareness and willingness to engage in the process of feeling and dealing with stirred up emotions. Counselling at its best provides safety and freedom to discover, connect and reconnect to the various parts of ourselves; like a mirror that provides an accurate reflection of its subject. Ideally this will result in feeling more like ourselves or perhaps discovering new aspects of ourselves for the first time.

I am privileged to support and celebrate with clients in their moment-to-moment victories, talking back to anxiety and depression instead of listening to it, choosing self-compassion over self-deprecation, and prioritizing self-care over self-neglect. No two days, clients, or presenting issues are ever the same. There are simply no one size fits all answers or solutions to life's problems.

Some of my most memorable moments with clients are in shared silence, tears and healing laughter. I recall the time when an older client who was unclear about what was involved in counselling after my best explanation asked, "Are we doing it yet?" Or more recently to my delight and surprise when a client greeted me with a bouquet of flowers to celebrate our first in-person meeting after 2 years of remote work throughout covid.

As a counsellor with a background in spiritual care and psychotherapy, this is a spiritual experience. My confidence in supporting folks through this process comes from professional development as well as my own experience of reconnection within myself. I am constantly in a process of contemplation, change and transformation. I am a life-long learner who does the ongoing work of examining and re-examining my own biases, beliefs and ideologies. I am impacted by the work I do, the people I see and am forever changed in the process.

Upcoming Events

10,000 Steps for Mental Health

Saturday,
September 17, 2022

Registration opens in August 2022 by visiting shalomcounselling.org/steps

Shalom Spring Brunch

Saturday,
May 6, 2023

Support the journey of hope and healing

We recently received the following affirmation to share with the people who support the work of Shalom. Thank you for being part of this journey!

"I would not be able to afford counselling without help, so I am very grateful for the kind people who subsidize my care. My faith is very important to me but it would be hard for me to talk with someone without their own experience of the Christian faith, so Shalom is especially valuable to me. Thank you!"

If you are interested in donating to the ongoing work of Shalom Counselling, you can donate in the following ways:

Cheque

Cheques can be made payable to:

Shalom Counselling Services Inc.

Credit Card

Credit card donations can be made online or by phone:
shalomcounselling.org/donate
(519) 886-9690

Legacy Gifts

Legacy gifts (estates and wills) can be made through Abundance Canada

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