

Linda Roggli:

It's October, 2020, and even in the midst of a crazy year, it's still ADHD awareness month. And we're still here with TADD Talks from ADDA, the Attention Deficit Disorder Association, nine minutes short, pithy soundbites on living with adult ADHD. Stay tuned, here it comes.

Caroline Maguire:

Hello, I'm Caroline Maguire and I am an ADHD and social skills coach and the author of *Why Will No One Play With Me?* I'm in Concord, Massachusetts, and I am so happy today to share my thoughts about connection and the "5 Things Adults with ADHD Can Do in order to Connect Better." I know that connection is sometimes hard for us, and sometimes it's hard for us to reach out and have those connections. Based on past experience, you know, we know that we people please, we know that we rush in too much. We know that we overshare. And so our tendency is to opt out. But, you know, I think if this year has taught us anything, it's taught us that connection is the most important thing and that we as human beings need to be connected to people. So what I'm talking about today is really some practical steps toward connection so that you can have the kind of long-term relationships, friendships, networking, workplace relationships and connections that you need, and that all of us need.

Caroline Maguire:

Now this takes time and I'm going to be talking about five things you can do, but I also am going to be talking about underlying skills. And what I would say to you is, you know, many times as I'm going through this advice, you might hear skills that you struggle with. And my thought there is to really then maybe pause and focus on that skill, focus on reading social cues, focus on, you know, calming your nerves and managing your anxiety. And then you can proceed through the steps. It is something that takes a while. This is a longer-term journey for some people and it's worth it, right? So what we want to do is feel good and feel like we have those possibilities of those connections, because we do have those possibilities. My biggest advice is always to work on one thing. And so whether you're entering a virtual door or a real door is to set your intention and work on one aspect of what I'm talking about today and then add to that because otherwise it can be kind of overwhelming.

Caroline Maguire:

So here's step one. The first thing you can do to improve social connections is to pause and be mindful and center yourself. This might be hard for you based on past experience. You might not love a lot of the suggestions people make about being mindful and it feels kind of like a chore to many people, but one of the things we need to do is really pause as we enter social situations and be centered and be able to detect those social norms. Read what the culture is, think about what's going on in the situation. And as I say in *Why Will No One Play With Me?* take an inventory of the people and the context in the situation, and to really apply those skills. It's hard to do that if you're not centered and mindful and present. So what I always say is if you have to, you know, dip into the ladies or men's room for five minutes, if you have to go do a little game of solitaire on your computer, you have to do something to become more centered, that is going to benefit you. Because my second thing to do to connect and really have those relationships improve is going to be to take a bird's eye view and to really look and pause and take an overview of the situation. Who's there?

Caroline Maguire:

What are the social norms there? What's the culture and context? What's going on in that situation, what's going on with those people? And that will help you identify these undercurrents that sometimes get in our way or we ignore. And then sometimes we come across, you know, as just oblivious to these things, because we didn't pause and take a bird's eye view. So what I'm really talking about is being sort of a social spy and going in and looking at the situation and holding back a little bit to take that bird's eye view. Why? Because what I really want for people is for you to be able to interpret what's going on for people so that you can foster connection, right? And so that you can find a place, this is step three, which is to find a place where you can connect with other people, opportunities to frequently connect, right?

Caroline Maguire:

So to do that, we have to figure out what we're interested in and figure out something we can attend or go to, or do that's regular so that you have that connection. For us, sometimes it's hard if we're doing it ad hoc, if we have to reach out to people. I want you to reach out to people, but it's not always easy. So one of the things we can do is we can have a place that we figure out, or situations where we have the opportunity to connect with people who share common interests. One of my other big tips is to find a job. So if you're on a committee, if you're doing an activity where you have a role in a job, then it's a lot easier because now you have an excuse. You have a reason to connect with people rather than, you know, you're just there and you're sort of feeling on display.

Caroline Maguire:

So the more you can have that reason to connect and share common interests with people, the more you're going to have those opportunities and they're built in, right? They're very ADHD friendly because they're built in. So the next thing I want you to do is when you have those opportunities, which I would advise being frequent, right? I would advise you to do this two, three times a week, where you're interacting with people. It can be leveled. You can have, you know, sometimes it's a gym class. Sometimes it's a committee. Sometimes it's just going to something and seeing people for a few minutes at the end. Sometimes it's a group you join, but you want to have those opportunities built in and frequent so that you can practice. The next thing, number four, is to work on not rushing in and rushing into the relationship, right?

Caroline Maguire:

We have this tendency where we love intimacy and we love to be in a relationship. And we love to be really, really deeply involved with people, but relationships take time. And you're going to want to hold back a little bit and remember your level of intimacy with the person and share only as much as that level of intimacy warrants, right? And so my big number four is don't rush in. So take your time with the relationship and allow the relationship to be nurtured, right? So you want to see the person or the people once a week, once every other week - but you want to hold back a little bit on those details and think about what it is that you need to share. What is it that they need to know versus, you know, sort of sharing your bank accounts, your divorce, everything from your background. Allow your levels of intimacy to grow so that you have a greater opportunity to share that connection and to allow the intimacy and the relationship to grow, right?

Caroline Maguire:

And the other thing, number five, is to practice, right? So in order to really have those long-term relationships and to feel that we're really having the connection that we want, we have to practice getting out there and having these, you know, active interactions with people. Connection is a verb, it's something we do. It's something we take action on. And a lot of times we have stories that we tell ourselves about why, you know, people wouldn't want us or why we failed in the past, and it's hard and we judge ourselves very harshly. But the thing is that everybody deserves to connect and everybody has great things about themselves. Everybody has things that are super appealing and you do too. So the more you set this up as something you're practicing and you set it up as something where you're taking action steps, then you know, you're going to be more successful.

Caroline Maguire:

So practice. Connection is a verb. If you aren't taking action. If you're not getting out there, if you're not reaching out, then it's much harder to connect with people. And that's one reason I really want the opportunities to be there where you frequently interact with people because that makes every interaction have less weight. So I really hope that this helps because this is going to be an interesting year. And I think we've really all kind of experienced just how loneliness eats at us and how important it is to connect. And it's really something that we all deserve. And I know that everyone listening to this can do this because it really is something I've seen develop and change. But it all kind of does go back to self

regulation, right? We're all working on that so that we put our best foot forward. That is our TADD Talk today about "5 Things Adults with ADHD Can Do to Connect Better." It's been great being with you today. For more information on ADHD adults, find me at CarolineMaguireauthor.com. And you can also follow me on social media, coachCarolineMaguire. And I have tons and tons of information out there included in all of my platforms. I hope that you have a wonderful experience connecting and remember that it is a journey.

Linda Roggli:

Okay, that's today's ADHD wisdom. Much more to come. And why not join us for the virtual 2020 international ADHD conference coming up in November? Details at add.org. And while you're at it, why not join ADDA? It's a great investment in your ADHD life.