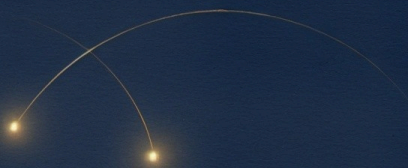


THE INSTANT CONNECTION

Jeffrey A. Orr



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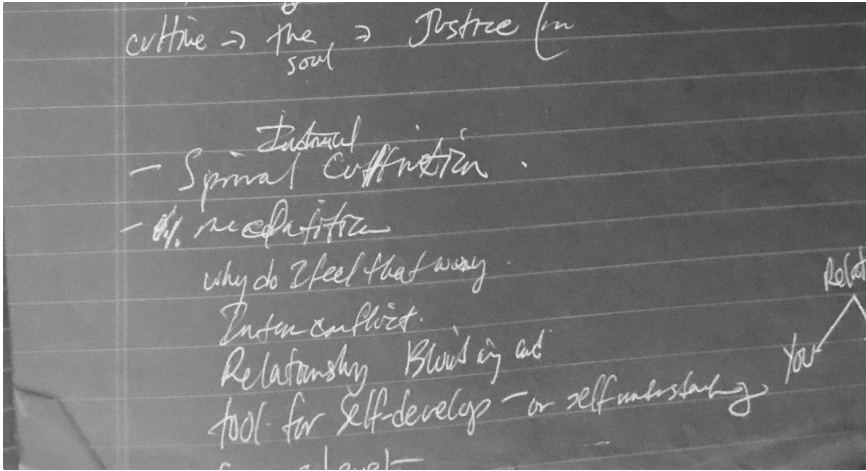
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CONTENTS

What is inside

1. A Path to Break Free and Live Connected
2. Above and Below the Understanding
3. The Instant Connection in Daily Life
4. Benefits of the Instant Connection
5. Conclusion
6. Keep Practicing
7. References
8. About the Author

A Path to Break Free and Live Connected



From the author's working notes

Private notes from a meeting with my professor — Fall 1994

A month after I turned nineteen, I felt lost. Was I an important enough person at nineteen? I had just started my first year in college and was struggling to find my identity in the world. I have always naturally gravitated toward following the rules, keeping my head up, being proud of myself, and focusing solely on my own success. But deep down, I knew something was missing. I felt disconnected from myself, and from the new faces around me.

It was not until I walked into my speech class that I met a professor who would change my life forever. He was a wizard of sorts, although I did not know it at the time. He had a way of *listening*, rather than speaking, that made me question every-

thing I had learned before. His guidance always began from the assumption that I already knew something, and he led me to think critically, to challenge my beliefs, and to connect with myself on a deeper level.

Over the next two years I absorbed everything he taught me. I learned to listen actively, to empathize with others, and to communicate my own thoughts and feelings with clarity and intention. I discovered that true connection requires vulnerability and openness, and that it can be a source of immense joy.

Now, three decades later, I have distilled what I learned from that professor into something I call the “Instant Connection.” It is not a theory. It is a possibility — a way of being in the world that allows us to truly connect with others and with ourselves. I have seen it work in my own life and in the lives of others.

In this book I want to share what I have learned about the Instant Connection and how it can change the shape of an ordinary day. Together we will look at what real connection gives us, what gets in the way, and a practice simple enough that you can begin today. Whether you are lonely, seeking deeper relationships, or simply want to communicate better, there is something here for you.

So come along with me, and let us discover the power of the Instant Connection together.

TWO

Above and Below the Understanding



The Instant Connection is a way of meeting people that opens a deeper level of contact. When we do not connect with others, we feel isolated, and that isolation carries real consequences for mental and physical health (Cacioppo, Hawksley, & Thisted, 2010). Connection runs the other direction: toward positive emotion, greater life satisfaction, and even increased longevity (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010).

There are three steps.

ONE — SET AN INTENTION

Decide, before the day begins, that you intend to connect with people on a deeper level. The intention sets the stage for every-

thing that follows and keeps you pointed at something other than your own performance.

TWO — DRAW ON MEMORY AND ACCEPTANCE

Recall something good, and accept the present moment as it is. This creates presence — and presence is what lets you be fully *in* a conversation rather than waiting for your turn to speak.

THREE — APPROACH WITH WARMTH

Come toward people with a willingness to connect. That means setting aside the negative commentary running in your head and offering warmth instead. People feel this, long before anything is said.



I think of it in terms of energy transferred between moving things. Picture two balls on a billiards table: one strikes the other, and the motion passes across. That is a metaphor, not a mechanism — but it holds the shape of what happens between people. Attention given tends to come back. Warmth offered tends to be returned. Set an intention, recall something good, offer warmth, and you have changed the small piece of the world standing in front of you.

Practise these three steps consistently and something shifts. So the next time you pass someone walking with their head down, remember what a moment of genuine attention is worth. You might brighten their day. You might make something beautiful out of thirty ordinary seconds.

THREE

The Instant Connection in Daily Life

THE PRACTICE

Pick a specific time — twelve o'clock, say. Write it down, or set it on your phone. Watch for that time. When it arrives, take twenty seconds for yourself. During those twenty seconds, repeat one phrase:

I am important.

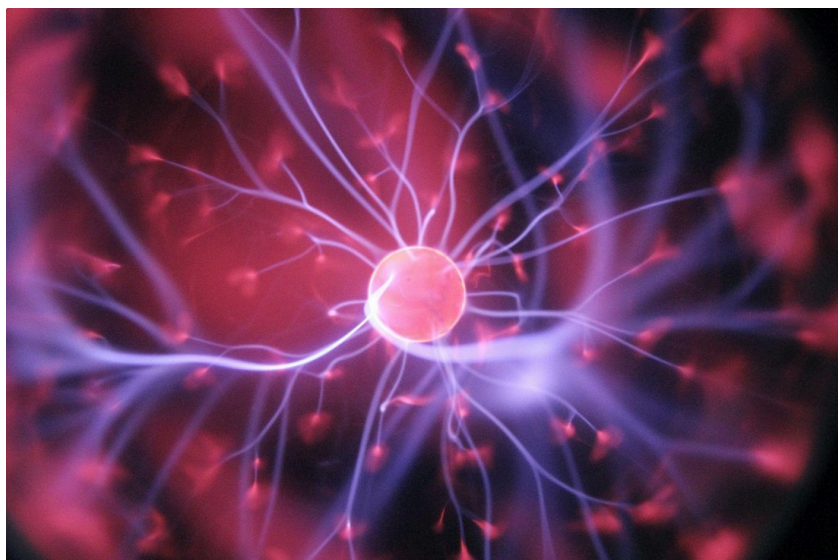
That is the whole practice. Twenty seconds, once a day, at a time you chose on purpose.

LET THE NUMBERS DO THE WORK

Afterwards, when any combination of your chosen numbers appears on a clock, let it remind you again. You picked twelve; now 12:12 and 1:21 and 2:12 all mean something. The day starts prompting you without any effort on your part.

By giving importance to others, we remind ourselves that we are important too. It becomes easier to understand people, even when they are behaving in ways we do not understand. Through something this small — an intention, a pause, a phrase — we cultivate steadiness in ourselves. And when we bring that steadiness toward other people, we create moments of real connection that brighten both sides.

The human face was not built to look inward. It was built to look out at the world and meet other faces.



WHY TWENTY SECONDS IS ENOUGH

Twenty seconds is short enough that you will actually do it, and long enough to interrupt whatever you were carrying. That is the entire design. A practice you keep beats a practice you admire.

There is reason to think small affirmations matter. Research on self-affirmation has found increased activity in brain regions associated with self-processing and reward — which suggests that reminding yourself of your own worth is not merely pleasant, but makes reaching toward other people easier.

As you keep at it, you are training your attention to treat human connection as something worth noticing, and to approach

people with empathy rather than calculation.

THE WHOLE PRACTICE, IN FIVE LINES

- 1 Pick a time of day — 12:00 pm, or any numbers that mean something to you. Write it down.
- 2 When that time arrives, stop for twenty seconds. Close your eyes. Take one breath.
- 3 Repeat a phrase to yourself. “I am important” works. So does “I am capable.”
- 4 When you notice your numbers on a clock later, let that remind you again.
- 5 Do it every day, starting with one time only. Add more when it feels natural.

Creating an Instant Connection takes patience, so be kind to yourself and notice your progress. You are building something quiet, one connection at a time.

FOUR

Benefits of the Instant Connection

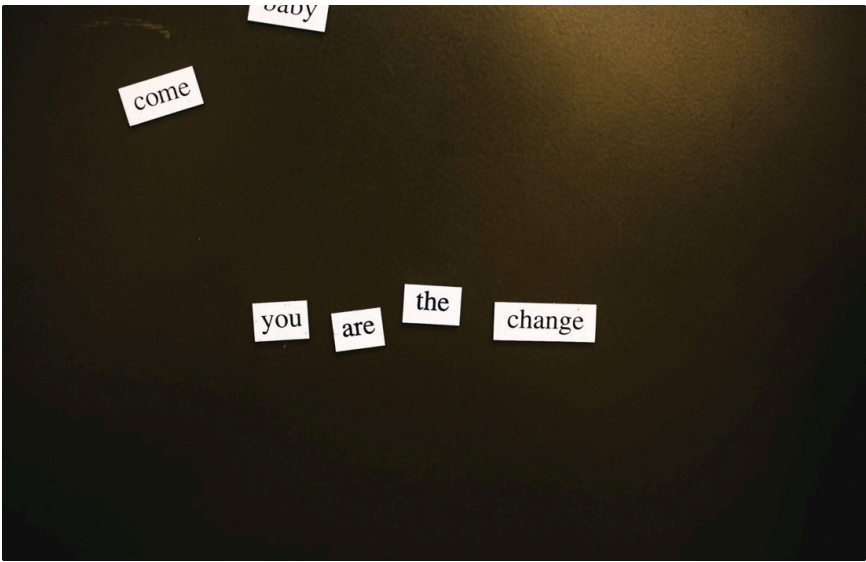
Connects meaningfully with others.

Imagine you are in a new city and you know no one. You feel lonely and disconnected. One day you decide to try this. You set an intention to connect, you take your twenty seconds, you repeat your phrase. Then you go about your day holding that intention lightly.

Walking down the street, you notice someone. They seem familiar somehow. You start a conversation, and before long you have made a friend.

That is what this does. By steadying yourself first and intending to connect, you become someone people can approach. It is subtle. It is also the difference between a day spent among strangers and a day in which something happened.

Social connection is not a luxury; research treats it as fundamental to well-being (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010). This practice is a small, repeatable way of moving toward it.



TEN THINGS THAT TEND TO FOLLOW

1. **Better relationships** — with family, friends, and the people you work beside.
2. **Less stress** — a few seconds of deliberate pause lowers the noise.
3. **More self-awareness** — you start noticing what you actually need.
4. **Deeper empathy** — including for people whose behaviour puzzles you.
5. **Clearer communication** — you get better at saying what you mean.
6. **Improved mood** — genuine moments of contact lift the whole day.

7. **Sharper focus** — less stress and better mood make room for work.
8. **Steadier confidence** — reminding yourself you matter accumulates.
9. **Physical benefits** — reduced stress shows up in sleep and immunity.
10. **More happiness** — which is, in the end, the whole point.

Conclusion

The Instant Connection is a way of meeting people that begins with meeting yourself. Set an intention. Take twenty seconds. Say one true thing. That is enough to change the texture of a day, and enough — repeated — to change the texture of a life.

The benefits gather quietly: better relationships, less stress, more self-awareness, deeper empathy, clearer speech. By connecting meaningfully with the people in front of us, we make something worth making.

Remember that this takes time and patience. Start small. Be consistent. Be kind to yourself along the way.

Connection is the energy that is created between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued.

— Brené Brown

Keep Practicing

A practice only works if it repeats. Two things are waiting for you at jeffreyaorr.com/practice.html, both free, no account required.

A daily reminder for your calendar

One file. Add it once and your phone will prompt you for twenty seconds every day at noon — move it to whatever time you chose. It works on iPhone, Android, Mac, and Windows. Nothing to install.

A twenty-second timer

Open the page, press start, and let it count. Useful for the first week, while the habit is still finding its footing.

If something here mattered to you, I would genuinely like to hear about it. Write to me directly — I read everything that comes in.

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About the Author

Jeffrey A. Orr was born in Turner Station, Maryland, and lives in Washington, DC. He is a proud parent of three, and takes real pleasure in trying something new most days.

He works as a Support Broker, helping people direct their own care — building self-direction budgets, coaching through decisions, and advocating so that the person receiving support is the one making the choices. It is the same work he has done for fifteen years, across program management, Medicaid compliance, and case management.

He holds a Master of Health Administration from The George Washington University and an undergraduate degree in Human Growth and Development. He has practised yoga, meditation, and Eastern philosophy for more than twenty-five years, and keeps returning to the question of how spirituality and health inform each other.

His first published book, *Journey to Self-Discovery: 28½ Days — Alignment Is Enough*, began as a private diary written each night at a Virginia ashram. He never intended to publish it. It is available in paperback and on Kindle.

Writing, recordings, and the practice tools:
jeffreyaorr.com