

# Join the “Three Micro-Connections a Day” Challenge

**B**EING “SOCIAL” can be hard for those of us with ADHD, regardless of our age. We often feel like ghosts, lonely and left out. Trying to be social can feel like an epic quest as we cloak ourselves in armor and draft battle plans to defend against the “just in case” instances that might come up.

Now, consider this: What if, instead of forcing ourselves to use all our skills and strain our systems in order to go out and meet new people in new places, we start off small—with micro social engagements?

## What are micro-connections?

They are small, everyday acts of kindness. Every time you smile at the grocery store cashier, chat with the coffee shop barista, or make eye contact with someone on the street, you are creating a micro-moment of connection! Known as the love chemical, oxytocin is essential to social bonding. This critical neuropeptide helps infants bond with their mothers, makes people more trusting, raises our self-confidence, and helps us feel connected. This love chemical calms our fears as we venture out to approach new people.

## What is the science of connection?

When you feel a connection with someone, it is likely that oxytocin is surging in both of your brains, signaling friendly intentions. This sensation encourages you to reach out, emotionally and possibly physically.

Oxytocin helps us read social cues better, which in turn helps us notice and filter social stimuli, a key challenge for those of us who can feel bombarded in social settings.

## Why specifically three micro-connections?

Research by psychologists Barbara Frederickson and Martin Seligman demonstrates that three social connections a day not only can help fill our emotional buckets but also builds resilience. They found that a three-to-one positivity ratio makes us feel like we belong. It also provided a positive impact on resilience and mental health. In Dr. Ned Hallowell’s book *Connect*, he shares real stories that demonstrate the life-changing health benefits associated with connection.



## Five Tips to Help You Build Social Attachments Through Three Micro-Connections a Day

### 1. Get your oxytocin every day.

Consciously try to boost your oxytocin by seeking out three meaningful interactions each day and reflecting on them each night. According to Fredrickson’s findings, these micro-moments may not only make you healthier, they can also help you live longer.

### 2. Formulate a plan.

Set yourself up for success. Think of some considerate things you could do every day, such as holding open doors, smiling, asking how someone is doing, and so forth. None of these require time, money, or effort. Now, what are less-frequent things can you do? How about complimenting a waiter or cashier, helping the elderly with their groceries, or actively listening to someone’s problems?

### 3. Don’t overthink it.

The goal is not to spend a lot of time prepping to connect. Try to engage in positive self-talk and don’t judge your connections, but rather, simply have them and experience the joy of interaction.

### 4. Build three micro-connections on the path to new relationships.

If your goal is to not only increase oxytocin but also to make new friendships, take a more active role with these three micro-connections. Consider these steps as build-

ing blocks moving you in the direction of deeper and more meaningful connections. If you take each step a time—waving, saying hello, making chit chat, inquiring about their day, etc.—it will make the act of reaching out feel a little less daunting. Is this a full replacement for the hard work we're all doing socially? No, but these steps help you build confidence.

### 5. Notice how you feel.

Keep track of how these connections (and oxytocin hits) make you feel. Fredrickson's work revealed that when we record these experiences, it triggers positive physiological effects on the body. Are you feeling more positive toward your partner or job? Do you have deeper feelings of well-being and self-worth? Are you calm? Do you feel even better when you add more connections daily?

**WHEN WE MAKE A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO CULTIVATE CONNECTIONS,** we benefit from needed oxytocin while we

nurture deeper and stronger relationships. I hope you will join me and let micro-connection prime your emotional intelligence pump. 🧠



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#### ADDITIONAL READING

Barbara Frederickson, PhD. *Positivity: Top-Notch Research Reveals the 3-to-1 Ratio That Will Change Your Life*. (Harmony, 2009).

Barbara Frederickson, PhD. *Love 2.0: Creating Happiness and Health in Moments of Connection*. (Plume, 2013).

Martin Seligman, *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being*. (Atria, 2012).

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