Connect & Renew: Resonate for Better Connections Ken Wilson

3\textsuperscript{rd} in a 6-part membership series. 4 on practices that help us connect positively with others. 2 on vision/mission of BOF.

**One-year/renewable approach to membership**: this is time to renew your membership for coming year or become a member for first time. Letters available to fill out and turn in.

**Wired to Connect**: Four distinct brain systems are needed for good relationships: Neural pathways that allow us to experience **calm, acceptance, resonance,** positive **energy** in relationships. Bad relationships take a toll on these pathways.

But brain can heal. **Dual witness to this: Scripture & Brain Science**

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.* (Romans 12: 1-13)

Two things: 1. God-connection happens in/through our bodies, which are holy & acceptable to God. Cultural boo-honkey that makes us critical toward our own bodies has nothing to do with God. Comes from what Bible calls, “the Satan” or “the accuser”

2. Our minds, as part of our bodies, are **physically altered** by our experiences in this world and **transformed/ changed/renewed** by connection with God. When this happens, we perceive-experience goodness-beauty around us more clearly.

Neuroscience tells us the brain has a powerful **mirroring system**. We are able to connect with others because our brain **automatically mirrors** what we see in others.

When I pay attention to something going on with you, the same regions that are lighting up in your brain light up in mine in a milder form. This gives me an approximate “**insider knowledge**” of you. When my mirror system is engaged, if I notice you in distress, I feel distressed. If I notice you smile or laugh, my brain automatically registers smile or laugh in response.

**Mirroring system** gives us capacity to **feel with** others. What helps us to **resonate** with others, a big factor in quality relationships.

Ro 12 also shows the effects of this mirroring in relationships: **“Love one another with mutual affection...rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn”** (Ro. 12: 10, 12)
Today: changing our brains so we can resonate more with others.

We can find ourselves in situations that weaken our mirror system, decreasing our capacity for and experience of resonance.

Imagine you were an ardent Bernie supporter during primaries and now you support Hilary, partly because other guy beyond your pale. Now imagine all of your extended family members were ardent Trump supporters and your family holidays were spent talking about politics like some families talk sports—as a form of recreation. Over on/off political banter over a long T-giving week-end, you will likely withdraw from conversation, unconsciously mask your facial expressions, and feel greatly misunderstood.

As soon as you get home, what will you do? Get together with closest Hilary friend and vent for an hour! Why will it feel so good? Because someone is resonating with you. Laughing at things you find funny, mad/sad/disgusted just as you are. If you shot video, mirror emotional expressions on your face—when your eyebrows raised, hers would too, your smiles mirrored in her smile, etc.

What’s happening in your brain. Over that long family weekend, resonance/mirroring system pathways will be starved, nerves won’t be firing. During that time, these pathways will shrink a little bit—weakening connections. You will feel yourself shutting down emotionally, going into hiding within your own family.

By contrast, time w/ your friend will light up and strengthen your resonance/mirroring pathways. These strengthened pathways will make you feel more connected to others.

Investing in resonant relationships increases our capacity with others in this resonant way: rejoice with those who rejoice...

In Hebrew Bible two relationships stand out as highly resonant: Naomi-Ruth (Ruth) David-Jonathan (1/2 Samuel).

Book of Ruth is about a mother-in-law, Naomi, and her daughter-in-law Ruth. Both in a state of relationship poverty. Drought sent Naomi and her husband and two sons into Moab, a nation hostile to Israel. Moabites do not resonate with Israelites. In Moab, Naomi loses her husband and two sons, leaving her with two Moabite daughters-in-law.

But something beautiful-unexpected happens: Naomi and Ruth bond in a highly resonant relationship despite the ethnic odds.
Naomi returns to Israel because she needs to be with people who accept/welcome/get her. She doesn’t expect her daughter-in-law Ruth to return with her because the ethnic tensions between Israel and Moab would make it hard on Ruth. Nevertheless, in a hymn to resonance, Ruth tells Naomi, "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." (Ruth 1:16-17)

**Resonant-rich relationship** between Naomi-Ruth is mirrored in Ruth’s new relationship with Boaz, a relative of Naomi who marries Ruth. A lot of marriages in Bible don’t emphasize emotional connection. But Naomi-Boaz connection is filled with mutual affection/warmth and resonant connection.

Book of Ruth ends with birth of Obed to Ruth-Boaz. Obed is father of King David. *1-2 Samuel* features another unusual and resonant relationship: David-Jonathan. Again, it runs against type. Jonathan is firstborn son of first King Saul, heir to throne. David chosen to replace Saul. So David & Jonathan should be **fierce rivals**. Instead, they become **fast friends**.

Friendship is rich with emotional resonance. Jonathan-David contrast sharply with intense rivalry that has characterized so many peer relationships in OT. More than drinking buddies (love you man...right, but you’re not getting my Bud Lite)

"Now it came about...that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself.... Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt." (1 Sam. 18: 1-4)

When Saul and Jonathan are killed in battle David offers lament dripping with love for both: “Saul and Jonathan, beloved and pleasant in their life, and in their death they were not parted; They were swifter than eagles, They were stronger than lions... I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; You have been very pleasant to me. Your love to me was more wonderful than the love of women.” 2 Sam 1: 23-27

**David’s line leads to Messiah-Jesus, who fosters resonance-rich friendships like this.**

Jesus seems to have had especially intimate friendship with siblings Lazarus-Martha-Mary. When Lazarus dies, grieving Martha travels to tell Jesus, who bursts into deep wailing-weeping.
I love the call of Nathaniel: Philip tells Nathaniel about Jesus of Nazareth. Nathaniel replies with group-shaming bigotry:

“Nazareth! Can anything good come from Nazareth?” When Jesus runs into Nathaniel, he says, “Nathaniel! a true Israelite in whom there is no guile!” Nathaniel replies, “Where did you get to know me?” And follows Jesus, despite his bias against Jesus.

Nathaniel leads with rivalry, Jesus turns other cheek, tells the good he sees in Nathaniel and it wins Nathaniel’s heart.

Classic. People who encountered Jesus felt known by him

As a pastor, ear out for experiences people have of God. Common thread in these moments is feeling known & understood—the heart of what a resonant friendship is like.

Samaritan woman at the well had that experience—after one conversation with Jesus she ran back to her village and said, “Come see the One who told me everything I ever did!” He didn’t tell her everything he ever did, but one conversation left her feeling as though he knew everything about her and it felt good to be known in this way by Jesus.

Practices:

1. If you’ve ever had an experience of feeling known/understood/accepted by God, call it to mind. Describe it to yourself maybe write it down. Then use it as a go-to memory to strengthen those resonance pathways in your brain.

2. If a lot of your core relationships (with family members, especially) are conflicted, increase the proportion of time spent with people who know you and like you. (One of the best ways to strengthen resonance pathways in your brain)

3. If you grew up in a family system that is low on resonance you will learn to mute/distrust/ignore your own feelings and tend to be uncomfortable with emotional expression. A simple way to overcome that is to learn to identify and name your feelings.

[Early adjustment to Nancy’s emotions—not being alarmed]

6 basic feelings: Happiness/Sadness/Anger/Fear/Disgust/Surprise
But each one has shaded meanings from mild to strong:

HAPPY: contentment, gladness, happiness, serenity, joy, elation, bliss, euphoria
SAD: disappointment, hurt, melancholy, sadness, gloom, despair
ANGRY: annoyance, irritation, frustration, anger, rage, fury
FEARFUL: worry, nervousness, anxiety, helplessness, fear, alarm, panic, terror
DISGUSTED: contempt, disgust, revulsion, loathing
SURPRISED: surprise, shock, amazement, astonishment

When children learn to identify-label their feelings in a more fine-tuned way, it’s a key to emotional intelligence. Less overwhelmed by their emotions, more at ease with emotions of others

Book of Psalms is evidence of how at ease God is with our feelings. How there is room for the range of human emotion in our connection with God. Read through Psalms (3/day) and identify the feelings expressed.