

*"Now a days, I think that everyone is disconnected...belonging feels like a foreign concept...I used to know the store clerk, my banker, the neighbors...thank goodness for camping and snowmobiling...at least we still get together as a group! The other day I asked my kids (we are a "blended" family..."Who do you belong to?" They answered with, "Social Media!!!!"*

*I want to know, how do we "belong"? By the way, thanks for your thoughts, Dr. Jim."*

How do I belong?...First and foremost, we have to develop a belief in ourselves...we must see ourselves as having our basic needs taken care of, we must feel safe and protected, we must see ourselves as being worthy and capable and we must know and experience a love of self. Of course all of these things come from our views that we develop as young children and over time, these ideas become not just experienced but also reinforced and entrenched in us.

If we have experienced disruptions to this learning, then we can more easily give in to other's beliefs and messaging, including social media. We can be more easily influenced by peers and others around us, including on line. Families that disrupt and then new family units that develop have to put in considerable effort to help everyone to belong and develop a healthy belief in themselves.

Sadly, I see the world of electronics replacing basic activities that families have engaged in for years to solidify our belonging and faith in self. I personally recommend the following activities for families to strengthen bonds and encourage a belief in self:

- eat supper together without any outside interruptions (including TV, phone, doorbells or electronics)
- have a games night and "play" together (yes, they still sell board games!)
- plan family weekends, holidays and breaks...get out of the house and get physically active
- teach a life skill...take your kids and help them shop for groceries, learn how to actually bank, order food in a restaurant and comparison shop in a store.
- simply sit down together and start a conversation about a topic in life...and avoid "why" questions!

Hope this helps!

Dr. Jim