

## **Being Connected**

by Lou Stoops

Being successful is about being; not existing but being. Being is about connectedness. Connection with God, family, friends and receptive to people in general. When all is said and done in life, it's the relationships we had that gave richness to our being.

Loneliness in our culture is growing and though people accumulate many trinkets and trophies, they still miss out on the joy of successful being.

Real achievement requires a fabric of relationships that bring meaningful content to our time on this planet. Even when we do things poorly, our relationships, if good, determine the degree of enjoyment and satisfaction that we gain.

Consider Roseto, Pennsylvania. Several years ago this small town aroused the curiosity of the scientific community. Why? Well, they had a very low rate of death from coronary heart disease. This fact led the Epidemiologists to descend upon Roseto, to study the factors that were contributing to their beating the odds. They expected to find low risk factors for heart disease, instead they found that the Rosetans had terrible health habits.

According to Dr. Joan Borysenko, in her book, *Minding the Body, Mending the Mind*, it was the social network of the community that produced the positive results. In Roseto, the extended family was alive and well. People knew one another, talked to one another, listened to one another. If someone needed help, there was no shortage of people to lend a hand. Interestingly, when people moved away from Roseto, their rate of heart attacks rose to predicted levels. The connectedness was more important than their health habits in predicting heart disease.

It would seem that the establishing of meaningful, intimate relationships, is at the heart of what it means to be successful. It is foolish to think we can have a rich life without investing in others.

Observation reveals that women are better at being than men. They seem to gravitate toward connectedness. Women develop, often very elaborate support systems that provide them with many benefits. It's not surprising that women live longer than men.

Married men live longer than single men. Even though men in general don't form relationships easily, a married man has his wife.

I recently enjoyed an article that originally appeared in Redbook and was reprinted in Reader's Digest. Joel Achenback wrote in "What Men Secretly Love About Marriage," a list of things men appreciate about their marriages. He noted that women bring standards to the house. Men often don't distinguish between a napkin or a paper towel. Their wives bring the discernment. Women bring comfort. A macho man still has need of someone to cling to when afraid. Women bring freedom from freedom. One of the reasons single men don't live as long as married men is an inability to



handle unlimited freedom. Achenback's main point is that women help men to become aware of other life forms. That is, marriage helps the man move away from self-centeredness to a loving "otherness."

No matter the gender, connectedness is a key to success. One can "be" when there is a purposeful reason to be. When the time for your sojourn on this earth comes to an end, you won't have any regrets about not working more, or possessing more, but many will have more than a little regret at not having loved more.