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Coach's Corner: Guess I'll go eat worms

By: Sharon Pahlka

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For Christmas I gave my grandson Joshua a set of *Wee Sing* books. I love to sing silly little songs with him. We came across a song that was by far my favorite ... want to hear it?

"Nobody likes me, everybody hates me, guess I'll go eat worms,

Long thin slimy ones, short fat juicy ones, itsy bitsy, fuzzy wuzzy worms."

The reason I liked this song so much is that I remember singing one like it when I was a little girl - to my brother! I remember sometimes feeling that nobody liked me, everybody hated me, but I never did go eat a worm (a little too disgusting).

Even though we often feel that we are alone in our need to belong, the truth is that we were all created this way. Every one of us desires warmth, companionship - someone else's heartbeat. The worm song is really a chorus. Realizing this, we can start to abandon some of the things that make it hard to connect with others, such as feeling embarrassed about being needy or being afraid to risk reaching out for fear of rejection or hurt.

Now, whenever I feel nobody likes me, everybody hates me, I can remember the truth: I am surrounded by people who need to connect as much as I do. I can be intentional about what kind of friend I want to be. I can be a friend who helps, is honest with feelings, who values and supports my friends. I can be a friend who listens, who is trustworthy, committed, and makes time for friends. I can be a fun and affectionate pal.

But we need to give connecting with friends and family a priority in these days where our lives are so busy that time for it gets pushed aside. It's important. If you don't make connections with others, your deep need for relationship can distort your thinking and objectivity (eating worms). Becoming deeply involved in your friendships and valuing the good things you get out of them help fulfill you and leave you feeling content.

To find friends, join a book group, take a class in something that interests you. Join a hobby group, a sports team, a church, a volunteer group or a support group. Ask the gym if anyone is looking for an exercise buddy. Look up some old friends. When you make friends, keep them. Ask them out for coffee. Make a commitment to meet or call weekly. Arrange regular potlucks with a group of friends.

It's up to you, but I have already decided - no worms for me! I will be part of others' lives and belong, whatever it takes.

Coaching Question: Where can you take action to increase belonging?

Coaching Tip: Imagine how you would feel if no one allowed you to help them. Allow people to "make a difference," starting with you.

Homework: Check your calendar and arrange some lunches with friends. Time invested in people you see on a regular basis gives you a sense of belonging.

Quotes:

"Solitude: a good place to visit, but a poor place to stay." -Josh Billings

"The cure for grief is motion." -Elbert Hubbard

Sharon Pahlka is a life coach and speaker. In her coaching, she helps her clients live well and meaningfully, especially those with chronic health challenges. Sharon's column, Coach's Corner, offers helpful tips from her work.

Contact Sharon Pahlka via her Web site, www.lifeisagift.com.

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