

Contact can be so vital

In our world of technology, it seems we have machines to do everything. But this doesn't reduce our need for human connection.

Sometimes a simple personal contact can be the most important thing in your life.

Counsellors are dealing with people's lives and emotions on a daily basis, and occasionally something happens to make us reflect on the importance of human contact. In one instance, it proved to be the difference between life and death.

A client (we'll call him Joe) had been seeing a counsellor for some time, but took a break because he felt he had got what he wanted to get out of the counselling at that stage. For some reason, our counsellor found the memory of him playing on her mind one day and decided to ring him, just to see how he was doing.

So she rang his work number and a message went out for him to come to the phone. She spoke to him and he made another appointment to see her. A little while later, she received a card from Joe telling her that at the time of her phone call, he had been on his way to the men's toilets to commit suicide – such was his desperation at the time.

But the mere fact of someone reaching out to him, via a phone call, brought him back from the edge. Joe resumed the counselling for a while and got his life back on track.

It just shows how something very small can be something extraordinarily important for someone else and can be a turning point in their lives.

Of course, tragedies will occur and we will always know someone who has been through the experience of losing someone through terminal illness, an accident, or suicide.

When this happens we are bound to experience some survivor guilt – could we have prevented it. Could we have done more? That's a normal experience, but it also reminds us to make the most of the contacts and friends we have when we do have the chance.

And if you know someone with an invisible illness, such as glandular fever, chronic fatigue syndrome or a mental illness, make an effort to remember to ask them how they are doing. That's what friends do.

Ring them today, or you may regret it later.

Survival tips

- **Human contact is still the most important thing in our lives**
- **Reaching out to someone can be the difference between life and death**
- **Don't put off making contact with someone you have been meaning to ring.**