

Info Kit & Discussion Guide

THE GREAT DISCONNECT

SYMPACTFUL WELLNESS MEDIA PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH MOCA FILMS & ARMADA FILMS DIRECTED BY TAMER SOLIMAN
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND CINEMATOGRAPHY ROB TYLER EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JEREMY WALTON STEPHEN PRICE OLIVER BARRET-LINDSAY NEVILLE HICKS PRODUCED BY TAMER SOLIMAN
CO-PRODUCED BY JEREMY WALTON ASSOCIATE PRODUCER CANDY WHICKER WRITTEN BY SARAH DOUGLAS KATHERINE SALTER TAMER SOLIMAN NARRATED BY TAMER SOLIMAN
CREATIVE CONSULTANT GEORGE HALVORSON CONSULTING WRITER JAY MUSTAFA EDITED BY ROB TYLER





ABOUT THE FILM

The Great Disconnect uncovers why, in a world seemingly more connected than ever before, people are feeling more and more socially isolated – and the true cost this has on our lives and communities.

Since its official launch in October 2019, the film has screened across Canada through multiple municipalities, non-profits and NGOs, and has been shown in ten countries across Europe. It has also been featured in over twelve independent film festivals, and in October 2020, the documentary won the award for Best Feature Film at the prominent [Better Cities Film Festival](#). The judges' panel included the famous architect *Jan Gehl* alongside other esteemed architects and urbanists.

Synopsis

We are living in a time that has been described as the “age of loneliness.” Despite Western advances in technology, living conditions, education and healthcare, we as a society, are isolating ourselves from one another and because of this, facing a health crisis that affects all ages, genders, races, and cultures.

But how have we become so disconnected? And what can we do to change the status quo and fulfill our potential for health and well-being?

Join wellness expert Tamer Soliman as he journeys through North American cities to meet with local citizens, community activists, and leading authorities on social, economic, and urban planning to discover the true factors that have profound and lasting impacts, not only on our health, but the health of the communities in which we live.

This timely documentary invites us to reflect on the relationships we have with those around us and raises the question: is it possible to overcome our modern culture of disconnectedness and rediscover how truly essential we are to one other?



Click the “play” button to watch the trailer.



FEATURING

PAUL BORN

Former President and CEO of
Tamarack Institute

TARA GRUENEWALD

Associate Professor of
Psychology,
Chapman University

SHERRY TURKLE

Professor, Social Studies of Science &
Technology MIT

RON FINLEY

Community Activist & Gangster Gardener

LARA AKNIN

Associate Professor of Social
Psychology,
Simon Fraser University

DR. JOHN HELLIWELL

Editor of The World Happiness Report

ROB BARRS

Urban Planner
Principal at MODUS Design & Engagement

DR. TREVOR HANCOCK

Retired professor and Scholar,
School of Public Health and Social
Policy,
University of Victoria

DOUG TINDAL

Writer, Co-Housing Advocate

VINCE VERLAAN

Engagement & Facilitation
Specialist,
OD4Impact

DR. MARLENE EPP

Professor of Food History,
University of Waterloo

NATHAN EDELSON

City Planner

KIRSTEN SOUTHCOTT

Condo dweller

TAMER SOLIMAN

Director, Producer, Co-Writer



CREATORS

TAMER SOLIMAN

DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, CO-WRITER

Before producing health documentaries, Tamer built his career as a holistic nutritionist, personal trainer and wellness speaker. Making this film has changed the way Tamer understands true health. Moving beyond simply eating well and exercising, Tamer now believes that in order to live in a state of optimal wellness, you need to have a strong sense of community wellbeing. Currently living in Ottawa, Tamer is partnering up with community leaders locally and internationally to continue to spread the message of this film.

JEREMY WALTON

CO-PRODUCER, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER,
PHOTOGRAPHER

Following a successful 25-year career in the financial services industry, Jeremy turned his business acumen and work ethic to film production. He was an associate producer of the comedy horror film *Zombie Driftwood*, Executive Producer of the award-winning documentary *Bright Spot* and Co-Producer of *The Great Disconnect*. In 2018, he formed Windjammer Productions to acquire and develop a slate of properties for TV and film production.

SARAH DOUGLAS

WRITER AND STORY EDITOR

Sarah is a multi-passionate educator who believes in the power of community wellbeing. As a writer of the film, it is her hope that *The Great Disconnect* becomes part of a movement to create a more mindful, conscious and connected place for us all to live in.

ROB TYLER

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY,
CREATIVE DIRECTOR AND EDITOR

Rob is an award winning filmmaker located in the Cayman Islands. His previous film work includes the award winning documentary *Bright Spot*, which he created alongside friend and colleague, Tamer Soliman. Rob now runs his own production company Armada Films and is an active member of the film community in Cayman.

CANDY WHICKER

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

Candy has always enjoyed telling stories and loves the medium of film, so after a successful investment banking career she decided to delve into the world of filmmaking. In 2016 she joined Tamer on *The Great Disconnect* as an associate producer and filmed behind the scenes. Candy is married to Simon, has two grown children, and values living in a small, connected community in Cayman.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Before making this film, I had been aware of the concept of community wellbeing, but I never really thought too much about it, and I definitely didn't think it was a key factor in achieving optimal health. As a result, in my decade's work as a wellness professional, I advised my clients that health was defined by two things: what we ate and how much we exercised.

But all of that changed after a trip to the Blue Mountains of Jamaica. I stayed a few nights in a small mountain camp, outfitted with just the basics for simple village life. The purpose of the trip was to learn from the local population about food, nutrition and sustainable living, but what really overwhelmed me was the profound sense of community. Despite lacking material possessions that most of us place such high value on, the people of this village seemed happy, healthy and really connected to one another. This made me wonder — How do people in North America feel about their sense of community and connectedness? And what, if any, effect does this have on our overall wellbeing?

These questions inspired me to direct and produce ***The Great Disconnect***. As I met with experts in economic, social and urban planning, I discovered how multifaceted this idea of community wellbeing is, and how crucial it is to our existence. There are great benefits to being able to come together, but there are also ill effects that stem from community breakdown. These effects — such as loneliness and social isolation — are being labeled as epidemics, epidemics that may become one of society's biggest challenges of the 21st century.

Making this film has changed my definition of what it really means to be healthy - physically, emotionally, and socially. My hope is that by watching this film people will reflect on the idea that to be well, we need to find ways to come together. The health of society as a whole depends on it.

- Tamer Soliman, Director

If you're interested in Tamer's keynote titled - *The Power of Connection: How to Build Community in the 21st Century* contact him directly for more info at tamer@tamersoliman.ca



FILM THEMES & FILMMAKER FAQS

Main themes of the film

- Explanation of our “age of loneliness” and the negative impacts at both an individual level (physical and mental) and societal level (community breakdown).
- Exploration of the potential causes of loneliness (e.g., urban design, economic factors, personal/societal values, media, technology) and the resulting negative consequences.
- How to create more community connections, and why it’s important (e.g. community gardens, getting to know your neighbours, volunteer work, improvements to urban design, mindful use of technology).

Frequently Asked Questions (for the filmmakers)

- What was your inspiration for the film?
- This film was created pre-pandemic. How has your experience of sharing the film changed since the pandemic? How do you think the pandemic will affect community connections in the long term?
- In modern society, we often move around and don’t live in the same cities as close to friends and families. Isn’t it true that technology has greatly increased our ability to stay connected with those not close to us physically - particularly during the pandemic? How can we strike a healthy balance between our real life and online interactions?
- Tell us more about the process of planning the “party on the rooftop” with Kirsten. What was it like being there and waiting for the guest to arrive?
- What’s the value of knowing your neighbours?
- Where are good examples urban design for community that you’ve learned about since the making of this film?
- What are some things that people can do - today - to increase their sense of community?
- How has the film changed you? What lessons have you applied in your own life?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE AUDIENCE

- What did you already know about the film's subject before watching the film? What new things did you learn? What questions do you still have?
- The film explored a number of reasons for community breakdown. In your day-to-day life, which aspect of community disconnect affects you the most and why?
- In the film, Tara Gruenwald states, "Ask yourself, how am I doing? And if you don't like the answer to that question, then make a plan to be more connected to others." Reflect on this for a moment. How are you doing with your own sense of community? Brainstorm actions that you can take to help you feel more connected to those around you.
- Were there any quotes or sections of the film that you found particularly compelling? What stood out for you?
- The film highlights the value of connecting *with* others to do something *for* others. What kind of groups/activities/causes could you see yourself getting involved in?
- How well do you know your neighbours? If possible, share a story of connecting with someone in your neighbourhood.
- Have you ever lost a wallet? Was it returned to you? How did the study done by the *Toronto Star* featured in the film resonate with you? Did it change your perceived level of trust in society?
- How did the film impact you? Do you think you'll remember it in a few months or years?
- Technology is a will continue to be in our lives. How would you rate your relationship with technology? How can you ensure a healthy balance between online and in-person interactions?
- If there was a sequel to the film, what topics would you like it to further explore?



SAMPLE SOUND BITES FROM THE FILM

How can we, as individuals, be both individualistic and communal? That's the challenge of our time.

Paul Borne

How much do you feel like you're connected to others, how much do you feel like you belong to others? Are you wanted, needed, valued? Almost every aspect of our health and wellbeing is affected by the quantity and quality of our ties.

Tara Gruenewald

Winston Churchill famously said, 'We shape our buildings and then our buildings shape us back.' The same is true of our cities and our neighbourhoods - we shape our cities, we shape our neighbourhoods and then our cities shape us back. So in many ways our cities are a reflection of our thinking, and our culture, and our paradigms about how we see the world and how we see our relationships amongst each other.

Robb Barrs

It's probably true that over the last forty years that societies have become more individualistic . . . in part because that's the way the commercial economy is set up in order to make it look like you'll be happier if you've got a car that can sit on a mountain top or go on a fancy cruise - and I think that levies a cost on people.

John Helliwell

The notion of independence comes from greater affluence in western society. Every time we become more affluent, we use it to purchase greater independence. So independence is kind of the offshoot of affluence, and our increasing affluence and increasing independence moves us into greater and greater isolation.

Doug Tindal

When asked what are your most rewarding aspects of your life, people recognize it's the social relationships. But, when people are making decisions about their time, day to day, we don't always stack our time in that same manner.

Laura Aknin

When going out for dinner and everyone would be on their phones at certain times, and we laugh it off, but what conversations are we missing, what emotions are we missing, what could be maybe not communicated because we're spending time on our phone?

Kirsten Southcott

Over the past 15 years, I've studied technologies of mobile communication and I've interviewed hundreds and hundreds of people, young and old, about their plugged in lives. And what I've found is that our little devices, those little devices in our pockets, are so psychologically powerful, that they don't only change what we do, they change who we are.

Sherry Turkle

(Community is) more than just going off to meet your friends in the pub ...it is - are you engaged with others in trying to make your community a better place?

Trevor Hancock

The thing with gardening is that it's common ground. (Gardens) bring people together. That was one of my intents. I wanted to get people of different cultures in a garden together, because ... if we all mesh our communities, we mesh our food, we mesh our cultures. That's what I want to see happen.

Ron Finley



Reviews

“This documentary is a comprehensive look at all the societal trends that are contributing to our modern sense of loneliness and disconnection. As someone who has tried to make new friends and find a community in a big city, I see these issues all around me. I hope we can all heed the messages in this film and put more time and energy into our social connections—which are crucial to our happiness and well-being and the flourishing of our societies.”

- Kira Newman

Editor and writer at Greater Good Science Centre

“The Great Disconnect is a wonderful film that really encourages critical reflection and challenges the traditional concept of community. The film touches on how difficult finding community can be when living in urban spaces. As someone who works in and with community everyday, I love to watch a film that challenges my thinking and makes me reflect on my own sense of community. A thought provoking film that reminds viewers of the importance of community on well-being, I would definitely recommend!”

- Emma Wallace

Research and Evaluation Assistant at EndPoverty Edmonton

*“As Chair of the Centre for the Study of Living Standards I am very much interested in individuals' and societies' well-being. Those who study well-being have come to realize they need to broaden their perspective beyond standard measures such as employment and income. Social connections feature prominently in self-assessments of happiness or well-being. Solid social and family connections are common factors for individuals and societies who age well, physically and mentally. **The Great Disconnect** provides a masterful distillation of these theoretical links to well-being. But the documentary provides its greatest service in demonstrating at the personal level how connections support well-being and isolation leads to mental and physical impairment. The documentary is informative and entertaining while driving home a powerful lesson in this era of the great disconnect. Hang up and connect!”*

- Don Drummond

Former Chief Economist and SVP, TD Bank
Former Associate Deputy Minister, Finance Canada
Stauffer-Dunning Fellow, Queen's University

"Here in the City of Edmonton we have a civic department called "The Neighbourhoods Services", staff work hard to stand with neighbourhood leaders as they focus on building their local communities. This documentary is a tool that leaps that work forward. Municipalities, NGO's, neighbourhood leadership all stand to advance the neighbouring movement through the showing of this compelling work."

- Howard Lawrence & Chantile Shannon

City of Edmonton



Reviews

“This movie was a game changer in my life. I knew community was important, and that we’re so cut off in our lives from our communities, but what I didn’t realize is how much I was part of that disconnect! This movie has changed how I interact with strangers, acquaintances, and people I know very well. Definitely a must-see!!”

-Sarah Griffin

Primary Montessori School Teacher

“This film describes one of the most pressing issue of our time - loneliness and the erosion of our social fabric. It was inspiring to see how powerful just one woman and a simple invitation could be to bringing people together again in a city like Vancouver. It inspired me to throw a block party in my own neighbourhood!”

-Natasha Pei

Community Animator at Tamarack Institute

“This film assisted us in creating a space that enabled our audience to reflect on the human need for belonging and highlighted that meaningful relationships with others is what drives our sense of belonging. This in turn helped youth delegates and adults in our audience to connect in a meaningful way, and to recognize the gaps that exist in our society, so that together we can continue to address the barriers of isolation for all people living in our communities. The message of this film is timely and relevant to audiences of all ages.”

-Emily Branje

Community Development, Disability Rights and Awareness Consultant
Community Living Ontario

“I had a chance to join this screening and really enjoyed it. It reinforced some of my beliefs in community development, especially the most important idea that we are heading into a social isolation crisis. It is going to take a lot of retraining within our society to feel comfortable reaching out to strangers. Thanks for making and sharing this important message”

-Kimberley Stratford

Neighbourhood Coordinator at City of Victoria

“Having just moved into a condo in a new city I want to reach out to my new neighbours. The movie, The Great Disconnect is a must see movie for all towns, villages and cities. Getting connected with the people around you, stepping out of your comfort zone- to build opportunities for community! So wonderful!”

-Marilyn Moffat

Youth Engagement Coordinator



Reviews

"The Great Disconnect focuses our attention on what matters the most - our connections with each other. This film asks the right questions and draws interesting links through a compelling story arc. As our cities and communities continue to grow and change, deliberately making places that feel like home - that feed our spirits in addition to nourishing our bodies - is a critical health and wellness issue for individuals and collectivities alike. Building great places is fundamentally about planning for people, and this includes supporting diverse needs for ongoing connection. Don't miss The Great Disconnect."

-Kalen Anderson

*Vice President of Capital Planning and Chief Planner at the National Capital Commission -
Commission de la capitale nationale*

*"As an economist specializing in the measurement of well-being and happiness and author of *The Economics of Happiness: Building Genuine Wealth* (2007) and *An Economy of Well-being* (2018), I feel *The Great Disconnect* presents a compelling new narrative for building resilient communities and economies of well-being particularly in 'building back better' in a post-Covid pandemic economic recovery. The science of well-being reveals that relationships, trust and a sense belonging to a neighbourhood is undeniably the most important asset that defines quality of life across Canada. We need more stories like *The Great Disconnect* presents that amplifies the statistical well-being indicators, both objective and subjective or perceptual. I believe that perceived and lived well-being are important factors to guide the development of an economy of well-being for Canada. This important documentary film makes a compelling case for well-being, neighbouring, and creating more conditions for building enduring relationships are critical to Canada."*

-Mark Anielski

Economist and Author of the Economics of Happiness: Building Genuine Wealth

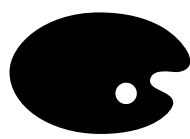
"The Great Disconnect is such a timely film! The negative health impacts of social isolation are very concerning. Our audience loved the encouragement to reach out to others in as many ways as possible. The film is a great balance between hearing from experts and showing how simple actions can be taken by each of us in order to increase our connections with others. City planners have a role to play in designing spaces that encourage connections too. Thank you for this film!"

-Janet Fairbanks

Former Director of Education at Hospital Employees Union

For more reviews, check out our reviews page on Facebook here:

facebook.com/TheGreatDisconnectFilm/reviews/



Visual Summary



Visual summary drawn by Rosanna von Sacken. Please contact us for permission to use.



In the Media...

Media links:

Best Feature Film announcement at *Better Cities Film Festival*
- Click [here](#)

CBC morning interview with Robyn Bresnahan - Click [here](#)

Oakville News Review of the documentary- Click [here](#)

Ottawa Canadian Film Festival Q&A - Click [here](#)

Phoenix Journal Q&A - Click [here](#)

Contact Information

Email: info@TheGreatDisconnectFilm.com

Website: www.TheGreatDisconnectFilm.com

Social Media: @TheGreatDisconnectFilm