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LIFESTYLE

Human touch

Slow, loving contact could boost sense of self

RESEARCH SHOWS A slow, loving touch, which is often an instinctive gesture from a mother to a child or between partners in romantic relationships, may boost the brain's ability to create a healthy sense of self.

These findings come from a new study published online in *Frontiers of Psychology*, led by Neuropsychology Centre Director Aikaterini (Katerina) Fotopoulou at University College London, and NPSA grantee Paul Mark Jenkinson of the Department of Psychology, University of Hertfordshire.

The study of 52 healthy adults used a common experimental technique known as the rubber hand illusion, in which the participants' brains are tricked into believing that a strategically placed rubber hand is their own.

As they watch the rubber hand being stroked in synchrony with their own, they begin to think that the fake hand belongs to them, reports *Science Daily*.

This technique demonstrates the changeable nature of the brain's perception of the body. IANS



ALIGN YOUR LIFE

Tune Into Life!

MY CHILDHOOD HOLIDAYS were spent in my grandmother's house in Rajkot, a small town in the Indian state of Gujarat. There was no television or telephone. She lived in a spacious bungalow surrounded by trees. There were railway tracks right behind her house, and we cousins spent many afternoons waiting for the train to pass. I learned to climb a tree and ride a bicycle during those holidays.

My grandmother was an amazing cook and we would eat sweets made in ghee without having to worry about putting on weight. Life was simple and it was easy to fall asleep at night. Things were uncomplicated and most importantly, we spent a lot of time outdoors or reading books. Since then life has changed and my family is now scattered all over the world. But whenever we meet, all we talk about is the holidays in Rajkot and how it shaped us as people.

These days life is all about technology – phones, laptops, tablets, and video games. There is nowhere to go and nothing else to do. It's all about surfing the net and living your life on Facebook. My nephews and nieces are whizzes at operating laptops, but ask them to step outside to play and their answer is always no.

When did we all become so self-centered? As the world has progressed; technology has advanced and we are slowly losing the human touch. Everything is online. No more human interaction is required. Books can be read on Kindle, movies can be watched on your phones and you can talk to your family though the computer screen! Gone are the days when we would visit our neighbours often or celebrate festivals with family. We hardly see our parents and are no longer creating new memories. Life is now just a click away.

So why not do something different for a change? Instead of spending an hour on Facebook why not go for a walk. Learn to climb a tree or simply ride a bike on the cornice. Spend a day with your loved ones after switching off your phones. Invite your neighbours for a cup of tea or go visit your aunt who you have not met in years. Call a friend or write a letter. Join an art class or simply do nothing.

The only way to live once again is to switch off all technology and tune in to life.

Shivani Adalja is an Abu Dhabi-based well-being expert. She runs the Alignment Institute which offers effective solutions that focus on stress management and overall wellbeing. Email align@shivaniadalja.com

Gene linked to marital bliss



RESEARCHERS HAVE FOUND a major clue in genes that establishes a link between marital bliss and a specific form of the gene, says a study.

A gene involved in the regulation of serotonin can predict to what extent our emotions affect our relationships, according to a new study that may be the first to link genetics, emotions, and marital satisfaction. The study was conducted at University of California Berkeley.

"An enduring mystery is, what makes one spouse so attuned to the emotional climate in a marriage, and another so oblivious?" said

UC Berkeley psychologist Robert W. Levenson, senior author of the study published online in the journal *Emotion*, reports *Science Daily*.

"With these new genetic findings, we now understand much more about what determines just how important emotions are for different people."

"We are always trying to understand the recipe for a good relationship, and emotion keeps coming up as an important ingredient," said Levenson, who heads a study group that has tracked over 150 married couples for more than 20 years. IANS

