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# Basic human needs: food, shelter...Facebook?

UCLA professor Matthew Lieberman's new book, "Social: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Connect," argues social connection is a basic human need.

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A woman checks her Facebook page in Washington, DC. (File/UPI/Billie Jean Shaw)

Facebook could be as important as food, water and shelter because it fulfills a basic human need to connect socially with others according to UCLA professor Matthew Lieberman's first book, "Social: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Connect."

"Being socially connected is our brain's lifelong passion," Lieberman said. "It's been baked into our operating system for tens of millions of years."

Lieberman is [an expert in social cognitive neuroscience](#), a focus that examines how brain function underlies social thinking and social behavior. "Social" cites more than 1,000 published and unpublished studies and explains how 250 million years of evolution have made today's humans "more connected to the social world and more dependent on the social world."

"Mammals are more socially connected than reptiles, primates more than other mammals, and humans more than other primates," Lieberman said. "What this suggests is that becoming more socially connected is essential to our survival. In a sense, evolution has made bets at each step that the best way to make us more successful is to make us more social."

He argues that many of society's institutions would function better if they were designed with an understanding of our social nature.

"Some day, we will look back and wonder how we ever had lives, work and schools that weren't guided by the principles of the social brain," he writes. "We typically don't teach history by asking what Napoleon was thinking; we teach about territorial boundaries and make it as non-social as possible. Too often we take away what makes information learnable and memorable and emphasize chronology while leaving out the motivations."

Lieberman is a professor of psychology in the UCLA College of Letters and Science and a professor of psychiatry and biobehavioral science at UCLA's Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior. The book will be published this week by Crown Publishers.

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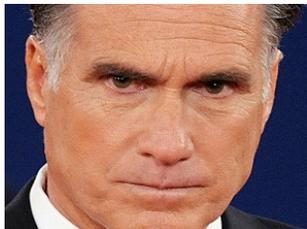
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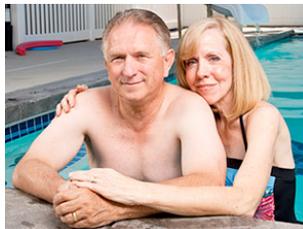
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