

CHOICES

Vancouver Island Counselling
vancouverislandcounselling.com

The Strength of Community: Finding Hope through Connection



As summer unfolds, many communities across Canada are experiencing the challenges that wildfire season can bring. While some are directly impacted and others watch from afar, events like these remind us of something fundamental: *we are not meant to face life's difficulties alone.*

In moments of uncertainty, people naturally come together. Neighbours offer shelter, volunteers donate their time, businesses rally behind affected families, and communities organize to support those in need. These acts of compassion highlight an important truth; community is one of our greatest sources of strength.

While we cannot always control the challenges we face, we can strengthen the connections that help us navigate them.

August 2026 Edition

Why Community Matters

Humans are inherently social beings. Research consistently shows that having strong social connections is associated with better mental and physical health. Feeling connected to others can:

- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Increase resilience during difficult times
- Improve overall emotional well-being
- Foster a greater sense of hope and purpose
- Help protect against loneliness and isolation
- Strengthen our ability to cope with life's challenges and adapt to change.



305 - 394 Duncan St
Duncan, BC V9L 3W4

Vancouver Island Counselling

Duncan: 250 746 6900

Nanaimo: 250 754 8222

Port Alberni: 250 723 7001

Victoria / Gulf Islands / Lower Mainland

1 877 746 6911

Connection doesn't have to mean having a large network of friends. Even a few meaningful relationships—whether with family, friends, coworkers, neighbours, or community groups—can make a significant difference.

Community reminds us that we are seen, supported, and valued.

Small Acts Create Big Change

When we think about helping others, it's easy to imagine grand gestures. In reality, communities are built through everyday moments of kindness.

A simple text asking someone how they're doing.

Offering to pick up groceries for a neighbour.

Checking in with a coworker who seems overwhelmed.

Listening without judgment.

Sharing a meal.

Smiling at someone who may need encouragement.

These seemingly small actions create a ripple effect. Kindness inspires kindness, and one act of support often encourages another. Over time, these moments build trust, strengthen relationships, and create healthier communities for everyone.

If you're looking to help in your community, please find below a few examples of places you can volunteer in the Cowichan Valley:

- **Volunteer Cowichan**
 - volunteercowichan.bc.ca
- **Cowichan Green Community**
 - cowichangreencommunity.org
- **Cowichan Intercultural Society**
 - cowichanintercultural.org
- **Cowichan Valley Basket Society**
 - cvbs.ca

Community in the Workplace

Our workplaces are communities too.

Employees who feel connected to their colleagues often experience greater job satisfaction, increased engagement, and improved psychological well-being. Creating a supportive workplace doesn't require elaborate programs—it begins with everyday interactions.

Organizations can foster a stronger sense of community by:

- Encouraging regular check-ins among team members.
- Creating psychologically safe environments where employees feel comfortable speaking openly.
- Recognizing individual contributions and celebrating successes.
- Offering flexibility and understanding during challenging times.
- Promoting available mental health resources and encouraging employees to access support when needed.

When people feel they belong, they are more likely to thrive personally and professionally.



Supporting Yourself While Supporting Others

Helping others is meaningful, but it's equally important to care for yourself.

If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed by current events or the needs of those around you, consider:

- Limiting exposure to distressing news when needed.
- Maintaining routines that support your physical and emotional well-being.
- Spending time outdoors when it is safe to do so.
- Reaching out to trusted friends, family members, or colleagues.
- Asking for help when you need it.

Accepting support is not a sign of weakness—it is part of what allows communities to remain strong.



Every Connection Counts

Community isn't only built during times of crisis. It grows through the conversations we have, the kindness we show, and the support we offer each day.

Whether it's checking in on a friend, volunteering your time, supporting a local organization, or simply making space to listen, every act of connection matters.

Together, these small moments create stronger families, healthier workplaces, and more resilient communities.

As we move through the remainder of the summer, let us remember that one of the greatest gifts we can offer each other is our presence. *Together, we truly are stronger.*

Join Vancouver Island Counselling's first 8-week Virtual Couple's Workshop!

This 8-week workshop is open to all kinds of romantic couples (not just married couples).

Learn from the groundbreaking research of Dr. John Gottman, a leading authority on relationships and marriage, in this intensive weekly workshop. Gain insights into the seven principles that can transform your relationship and bring lasting happiness!

When? Starts September 24 @ 5pm-6:30pm

Cost? \$100 for EFAP clients (to cover the cost of the workbook). \$400 for non-EFAP clients.

Contact us for more information and to reserve your spot!



305 - 394 Duncan St
Duncan, BC V9L 3W4

Vancouver Island Counselling

Duncan: 250 746 6900

Nanaimo: 250 754 8222

Port Alberni: 250 723 7001

Victoria / Gulf Islands / Lower Mainland

1 877 746 6911