



# The Psychology of Empathy, Connection, and Storytelling

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CEO of Influence 51





# RESPONSES THAT RESONATE



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# RESPONSES THAT RESONATE

The New York Times

**BBC NEWS** WORLD EDITION

You are in: Africa  
Monday, 3 June, 2002, 15:16 GMT 16:16 UK

News Front Page

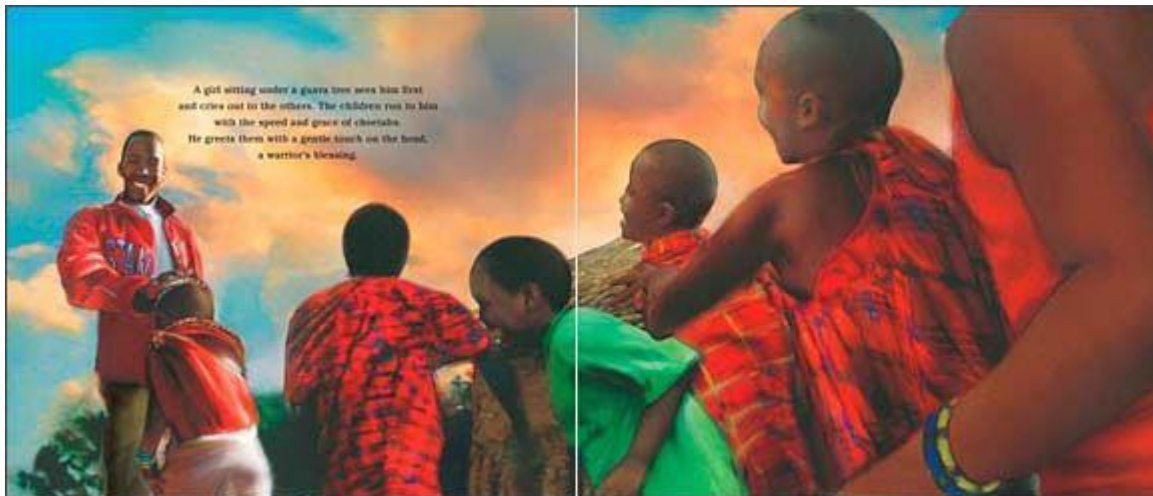
**Kenyan Masai donate cows to US**



Africa  
Americas  
Asia-Pacific  
Europe  
Middle East  
South Asia  
UK  
Business  
Entertainment  
Science/Nature  
Technology  
Health

**Talking Point** American diplomats have been given 14 cows by Kenyan Masai tribespeople in a gesture of sympathy following the 11 September attacks.

**Country Profiles**  
In Depth



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# UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS JUNCTURE



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# OPPORTUNITY AMONGST THE CHAOS

The good news? Situations like this provide a rare opportunity for businesses to *do well by doing good.*



# WHY? BECAUSE RECIPROCITY IS INNATE



When you accept something from someone – whether you asked for it or not – you feel compelled to give something in return.

Thus, it could be said that when we *give*, we also *earn*.



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“I DON’T THINK YOU UNDERSTAND...”

“Our company is in crisis. Our balance sheets are on life support. We can’t afford to give away anything right now!”

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# “GIVING” NEED NOT BE MATERIAL

There are plenty of low- to no-cost gestures that are capable of yielding tremendous ROI due to the emotional impact you can make. Examples include:

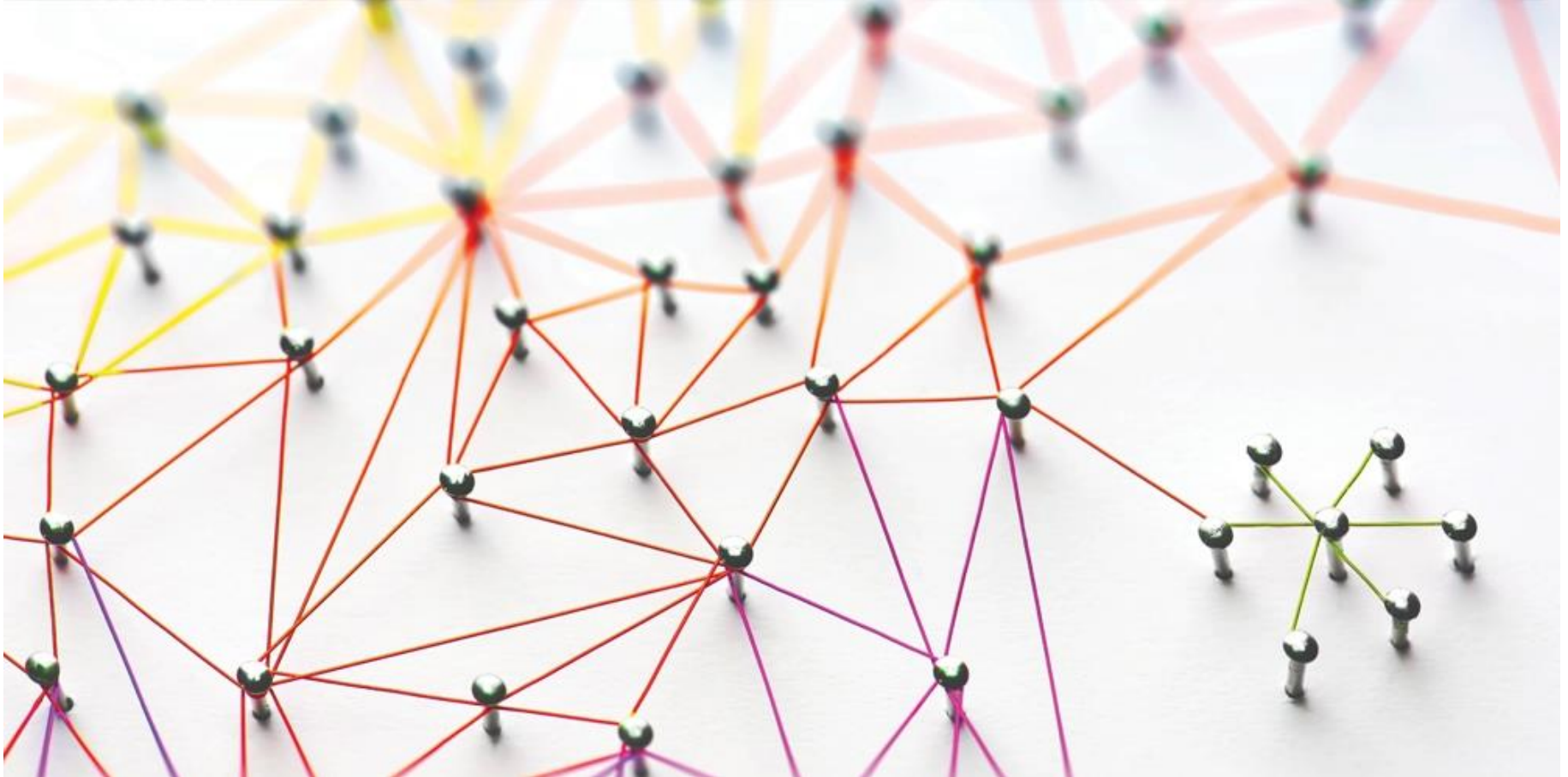
- **Send a Video from Your Company to Theirs:** Videos can lift spirits and show that you are thinking of them.
- **Help Them to Help Others:** Compile a list of resources that new, old, and prospective clients (and their communities) might benefit from (e.g. on loans, assistance, safety, etc.). These don't necessarily have to be business-centric.
- **Phone Call Check-Ins:** Call just to inquire about how everyone's doing. Don't try to sell, just be a human; listen and see how you might be able to help. The benefits can be reaped later.
- **Offer Free Advice:** Perhaps through a mailing list or newsletter. Advice is a non-zero-sum offering; you “lose” nothing but they can gain a great deal.



# A LESSON FROM MODERN ADVERTISING

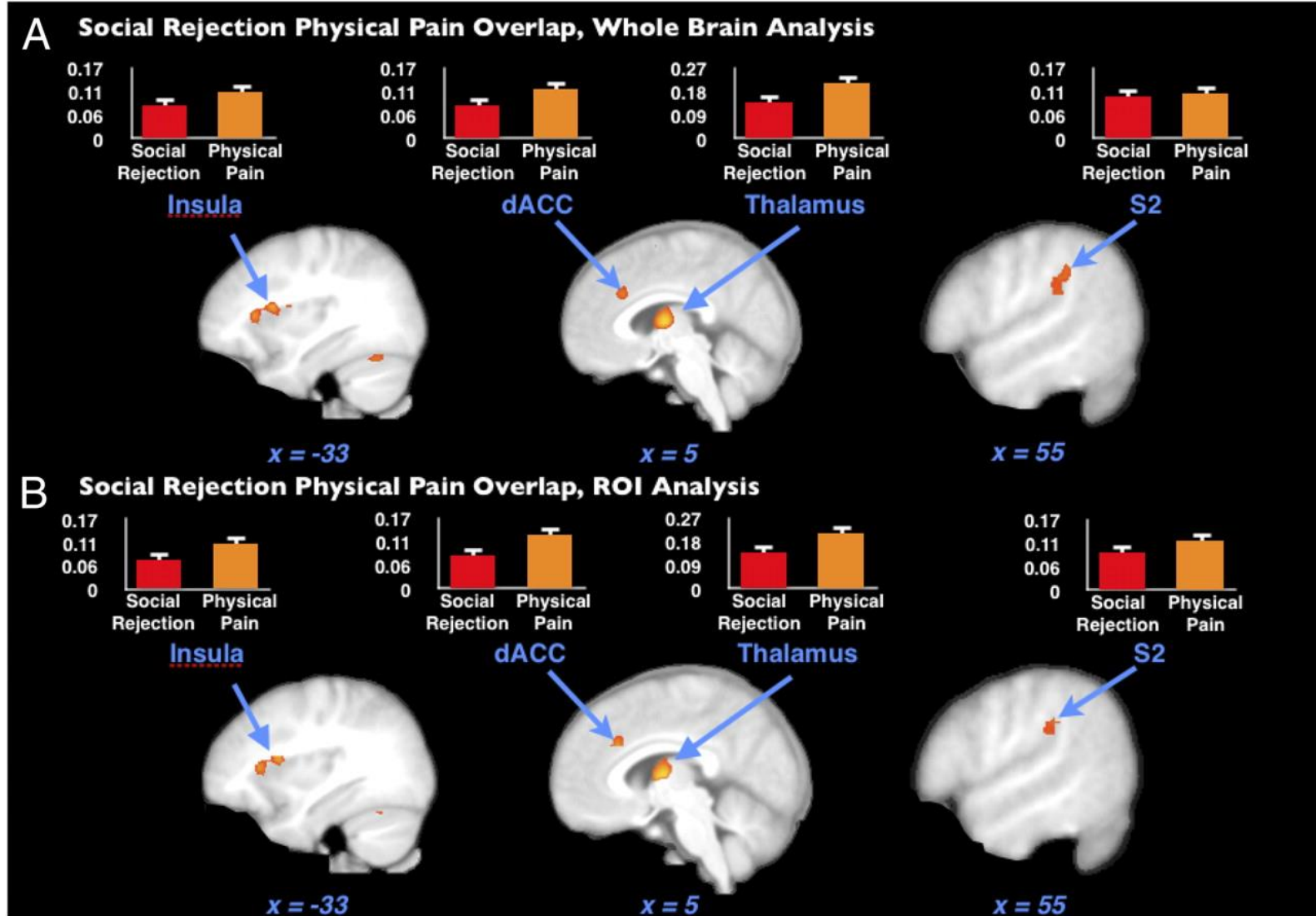


# CONNECTION



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# CAN I PLAY?





# SOCIAL PAIN IS VERY REAL

Research shows that individuals experiencing social disconnection (e.g. loneliness, isolation, exclusion, etc.) display...

**Cognitive Deficits:** Adults induced to experience social exclusion during a GRE-style test scored significantly lower than the group of peers spared from enduring such social pain. And the actual results weren't even close. Non-rejected adults managed to answer, on average, 68% of the test questions correctly, while those made to feel rejected only managed 39%.

**Less Motivation and Poorer Health Habits:** Socially disconnected individuals are less likely to "stand up to challenges," and instead respond to these obstacles with pessimism, apathy, and avoidance. They are also, on average, 37% *less* likely to exercise but significantly *more* likely to eat a diet high in fats.

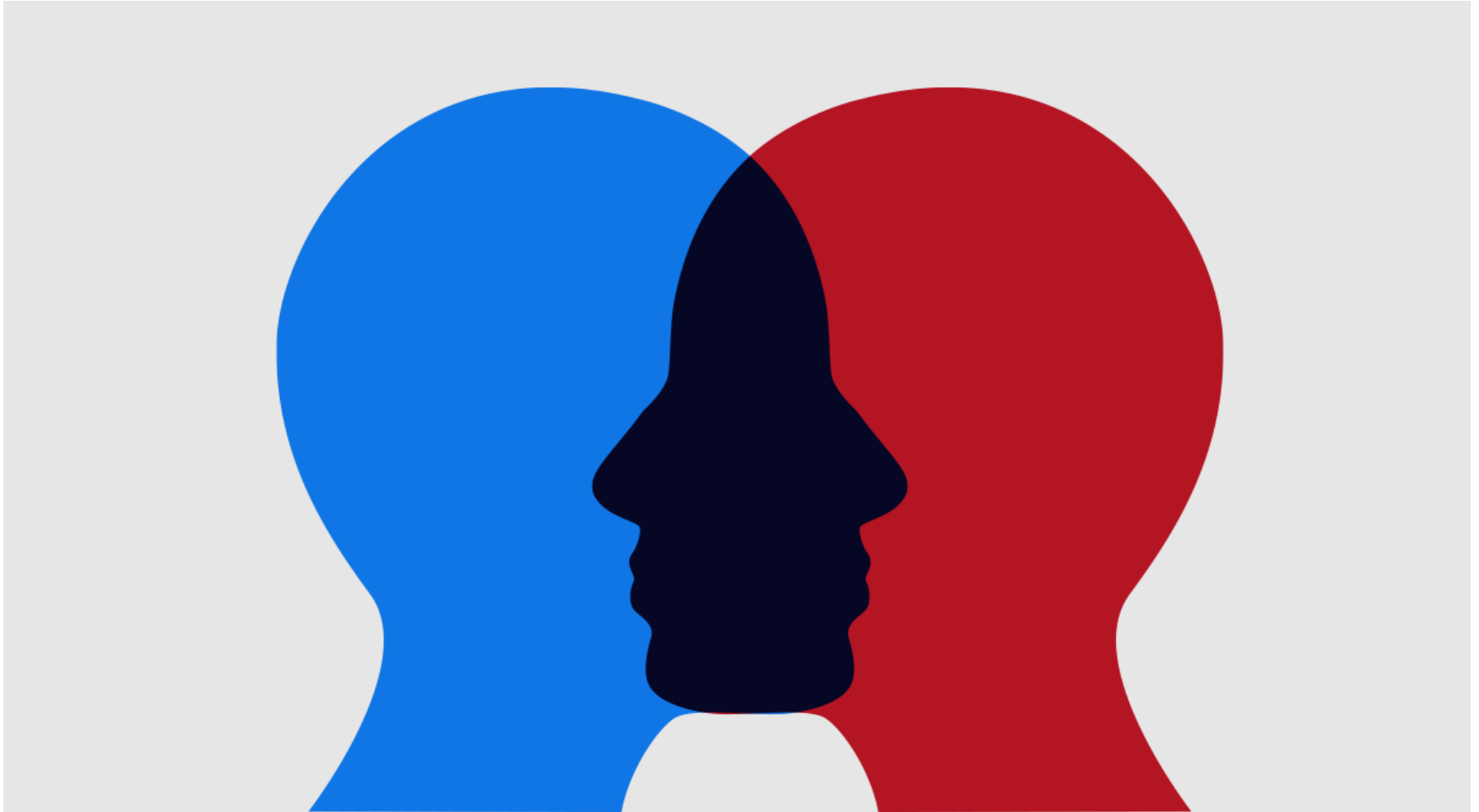
**Greater Susceptibility to Groupthink:** Individuals who don't feel secure with their social standing within the group due to perceived disconnection are less likely to deviate from the norms of the group, and more likely to conform.

# WAYS TO FOSTER CONNECTION FROM A DISTANCE

- Video chat as much as possible!
- Create spaces for hanging out during work hours; invite people to have lunch “together” or just work “side-by-side.”
- Invite teams to virtual happy hours or host virtual movie/game/trivia nights.
- Poll group on new hobbies you could learn together.
- Start an online book club.
- Have a team dinner where you all try new recipes together.



# UNDERSTANDING EMPATHY



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# EMPATHY



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# EMPATHIC MESSAGING

The key to creating empathic messages in situations like COVID-19 is to convey three things:

- 1. You Recognize What They're Going Through:** For better or worse, we're all in this together. Summarize the situation. Speak about your experience; what you're seeing and hearing. Lay out the facts, especially the obstacles and challenges – we know they're there, and pretending they're not just creates more anxiety.
- 2. You Know How They Must Be Feeling:** Make statements that start with “If you're like me...” or “I know I feel X, and I'd imagine you might, too.” Be honest about how you're feeling, and don't shy away from being a bit vulnerable – it can actually be comforting to know that even leaders are sharing their discomfort. Assure them that how they're feeling is completely justified, however...
- 3. You Do Have a Plan, But You Want to Know What Else You Can Do:** Lay out a clear roadmap. Let your people know that it's not perfect, and you certainly don't have all the answers, but that you do have some ideas. Most importantly, enlist their help! Let them be the heroes. Plus, people are more likely to support a plan when they help to create it.

# WHY IS EMPATHIC MESSAGING CRITICAL?

Because employees are rarely loyal to *companies* – they become loyal to *people* who happen to work for those companies.



# CRAFTING YOUR STORY



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# THE MOST COMMON STORYTELLING MISTAKE



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WHO ARE WE DOING THIS FOR? WHO'S  
COUNTING ON US?



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# YOUR STORIES SHOULD HELP YOUR PEOPLE DISCOVER THEIR INNER HERO

Good leaders inspire people by telling stories of their own triumph.

Great leaders inspire people by telling stories of challenges that lay ahead, and positioning their people as the heroes that will write the final chapters.





# THANK YOU

For information on how to work with JonRobert Tartaglione and Influence 51,  
please contact [Partnerships@Influence51.com](mailto:Partnerships@Influence51.com)

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