



There have been many positives to come out of the tough COVID lockdown and many ways we've had to alter our daily lives but one of the hardest for me - and possibly many - has been the "editing" of our closest friends.....our SOC or Significant Other Circle.

Before I continue, I want to first acknowledge how important my family is to me. I'm going to talk about my friends for the rest of today's podcast but i want to mention here that my family is my first stop and first line of support. They're amazing and have been with me through it all.

Getting back to my friends and SOC...

I use the term SOC as there has been much of my adult life that I've been in relationships and much time single and regardless of my dating or marital status, I've always found what is most important - aside from family of course - is the group of people closest to me and those I consider to be my SOC.

It's a circle of folks I feel they surround me with support, love, generosity, optimism, adventure, etc.....the list could go on for a while. These are the people I want to spend my time with. They challenge me and are there when I either choose or am forced to step out of my comfort zone. They know me well enough to know just how much I can step out of my comfort zone and they're there when it gets scary or tough....or even ugly.

Unfortunately, throughout the different stages of life, different members of your SOC will come and go but the true friends are the ones that you can always come back to. Who seem to know you, no matter what. Or who it seems like that no matter how long it's been since you've talked, almost no time has passed and you pick up back in sync immediately.

There are also times when YOU have to decide if it's time to expand your SOC. Maybe your interests have changed or you want to try something new. Maybe you've decided to try a cooking class, take a painting class or start a home improvement project. Maybe you decided to take up fencing or curling. What is wonderful about one of today's

conveniences is that you can find a group for almost ANYTHING you want to try. Meetup, Facebook groups, and most likely many many MANY other social media sites exist just so you can connect with others.

It can still be intimidating and if you recall last week's podcast about living curiously and removing the stigma of failure, you literally have to just get over yourself and try it. Many of these groups are set up for the individual - notice i did not say groups or friends in this spec example - but for you to join a group of likeminded people who also joined as an individual. So they are typically very welcoming to any newcomers.

Think of it like trying on new clothes - it's not too far off of Tom Hanks explaining his dating to his son in Sleepless in Seattle - that you get to try different people out and see what fits. The best that can happen is you expand your world a bit and possible expand those in your SOC. The worst that can happen is that you find after trying it, you either dislike IT or the people and then move on to try something else. No harm. It does take work but it's not as hard as you think and it's another example of how you can lead in your life to create what YOU want going forward and WHO you'll spend your time with.

So in this time of newly social distancing, especially as a hugger, i find it really challenging and increasingly difficult to NOT enjoy some of the simple pleasures previously had before 2020. Like carpooling to a group hike. Like dining together at a restaurant. Like running in what i believe is my close-knit mental health therapy session 2-3 times a week. Like just the simple act of not hugging or standing close. Having to meet up at the trail that's an hour away. Having to eat takeout in a circle 6 feet apart. Having to run 6 feet apart with faces covered and talking loudly to be able to experience SOME sort of group therapy.

Agree it could be worse - it could be that we were all still in total lockdown mode and unable to venture out, so i am grateful for this positive step forward.

Our SOC is no different than any other entity on the planet. To keep your friends and SOC you must invest time and emotional energy. YOU must give and not just sit back, waiting for others to initiate activities or meetups, or wait for others to take care of you. It's an important part of everyone's life and i encourage you today to spend a bit of time

So how are you staying close to those you can't really get physically close to right now? How are you altering your plans and activities to be inclusive yet safe? How are you letting these folks know how important they are in your life and how are you investing time into those who have invested in you?

It's an important part of everyone's life and i encourage you today to spend a bit of time making sure YOU are reaching out and nourishing those who have nourished you.

Check out my photos on my website at [www.destination-u.net](http://www.destination-u.net) and then Join me on the FB Challenge and share what YOU will do to get out take care of yourself and take care of those closest to you.