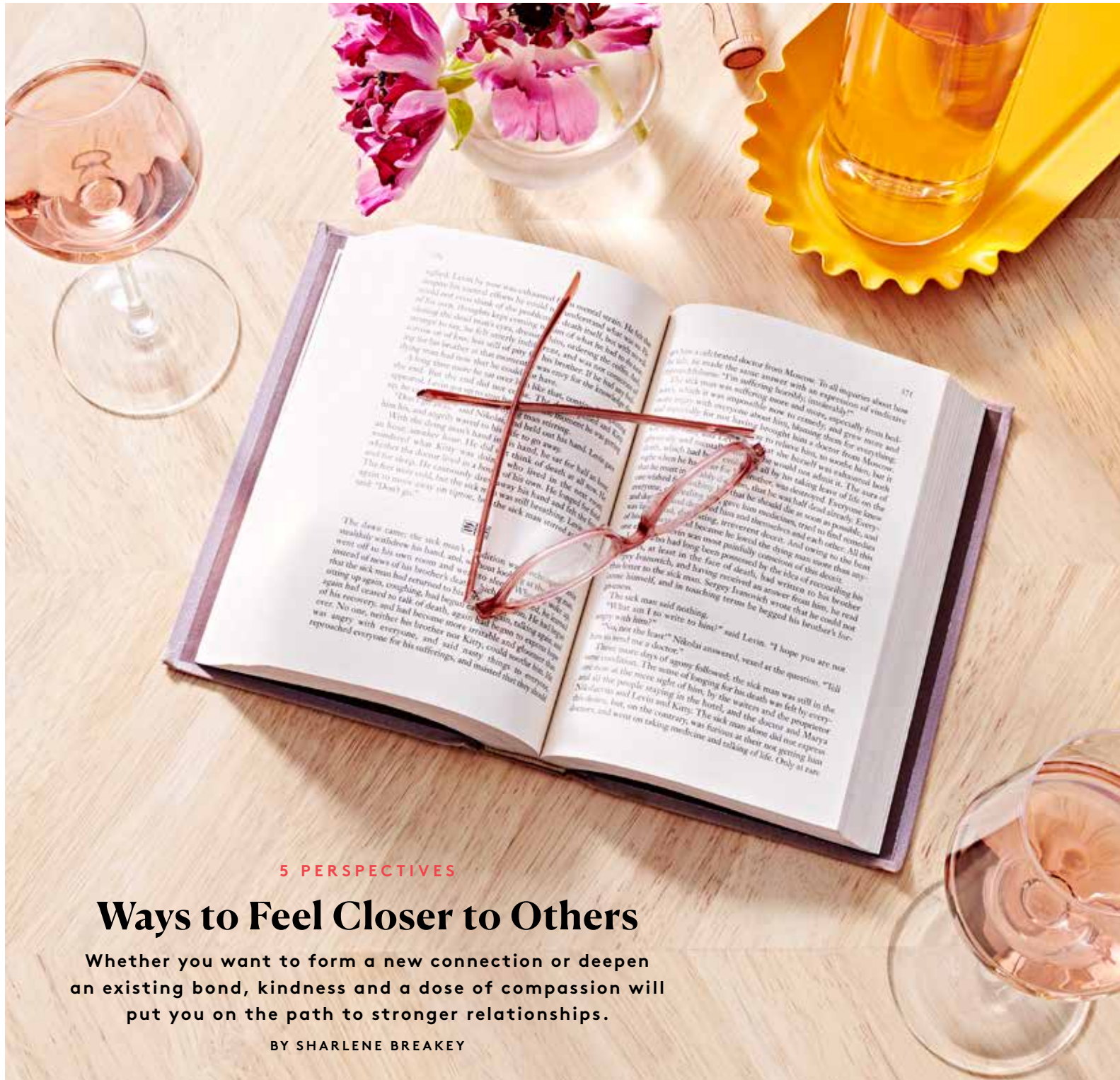


LIVES



5 PERSPECTIVES

Ways to Feel Closer to Others

Whether you want to form a new connection or deepen an existing bond, kindness and a dose of compassion will put you on the path to stronger relationships.

BY SHARLENE BREakey

PROP-STYLING BY HEATHER GREENE FOR HELLO ARTISTS

1

Read to a loved one.

Sitting down with a book and another person—a child, a spouse, or an elderly relative—can produce a neurochemical shift that creates feelings of calm, closeness, and well-being. Besides offering the pleasure of a shared story, reading aloud promotes happier family relationships, enhances children's social and emotional development, and stimulates cognitive activity in older adults while mitigating loneliness. And it's fun!

MEGHAN COX GURDON IS THE AUTHOR OF *THE ENCHANTED HOUR: THE MIRACULOUS POWER OF READING ALOUD IN THE AGE OF DISTRACTION*.

2

Be a good neighbor.

Early in the pandemic, a neighbor asked if I needed anything from the store. I didn't, but the moment still made me feel like there was someone I could count on, and that felt nice. Not only did the gesture reduce my stress, but research suggests my neighbor likely benefited as well. Making a kind offer starts a cycle of appreciation and gratitude. I was thankful for my neighbor, which made me greet her more enthusiastically the next time we saw each other, which made her pleased she had reached out. Such feelings spread, like good contagion.

JULIANNE HOLT-LUNSTAD, PHD, IS A PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY AT BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY.

These days, we must learn to read eyes,
tone of voice, and posture to
see what's going on behind the mask.

3

Shower friends with small presents.

A thoughtful gift, especially a homemade one, can cement a bond. Gifts are often a symbol of how much we value a friendship. When you can see your best pals in person again, wash your hands and throw your arms around each other. But consider acknowledging how much you care for them with a little gift too.

LYDIA DENWORTH IS THE AUTHOR OF *FRIENDSHIP: THE EVOLUTION, BIOLOGY, AND EXTRAORDINARY POWER OF LIFE'S FUNDAMENTAL BOND*.

4

Start a gratitude chain.

To remain connected to my kids and grandkids, I started an email chain for the 12 of us, in which we each list five things we're grateful for. The subject line is "Gratitude," and seeing it pop up in my inbox has become an unexpected delight. One person might say, "I'm so grateful my brother makes me laugh when I'm angry." Whatever serious or silly thing anyone writes brings me closer to them.

LYNNE TWIST IS THE FOUNDER OF THE SOUL OF MONEY INSTITUTE AND THE AUTHOR OF *THE SOUL OF MONEY: TRANSFORMING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MONEY AND LIFE*.

5

Hang on to what you've learned.

It's important to be attuned to others' nonverbal cues. My colleagues and I teach those skills to people who want to be more empathetic. In the best of times, we're often distracted by a friend's new hairstyle or by the plans we're making, and that may cause us to miss what's right in front of us. These days, we must learn to read eyes, tone of voice, and posture to see what's going on behind the mask.

HELEN RIESS, MD, IS AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PSYCHIATRY AT HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL AND THE FOUNDER AND CEO OF EMPATHETICS INC., WHICH PROVIDES EMPATHY TRAINING FOR HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONERS.