

### OBJECTIVE

Students will reflect on how they connect with themselves in order to draw their attention to the strategies they use to regroup, recharge, and reset. Students will then reflect on their current connections so that they can see their growth by the end of this program.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

Pre-Assessment (UCLA Loneliness Scale form)  
Circles of Connection sheet (1 per student)  
Connection Notes sheet (1 per student)  
Dear Future Me letter template (1 per student)

### RESOURCES

Slide Deck  
Video  
Optional Teacher Connection Challenges  
Additional Connection Challenges for students

### BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

The research is clear—loneliness is a crisis. We believe that through intentional connection we are building strategies for students (teachers, too) to feel more connected. Each lesson we will provide you with information about loneliness, emotions, and ways to foster connection so you feel more prepared to lead a conversation with your students. Each lesson begins with a story—a video story and discussion questions—to help build empathy in students.

From Psychology Today, "Empathic listening, which is the most important relationship tool around, helps us to connect emotionally with others and feel less isolated. Basically, empathy is the action or capacity of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and/or vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another. It is understanding where another person is coming from and communicating that understanding in meaningful language. It involves paying attention not only to the words of another person but also to feelings, which are expressed most clearly in nonverbal behavior. In fact, communication research has shown that nonverbal behavior is far more important than words in conveying meaning." (September 2021)

Each lesson, after a rich conversation with your students talking about the video and the story, we ask you to engage with your students in two activities. One for them to connect to themselves and one for them to connect with the people in their lives that they want to be more connected with over the course of the year. There is growing research that shows that our ability to connect to others is in direct proportion to how connected we feel to ourselves.

Additionally, we ask that you organize your classroom into smaller groups where students are working with accountability partners or Connection Teams. In an article published in August, 2019, the American Society of Training and Development studied accountability and found that people are 65% more likely to reach their goals when they've shared them with someone else. Even better, people are 95% more likely to reach their goals when they share them with a group and meet regularly to review them.

## BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE CONTINUED

This first lesson we lead off with a review of our Circles of Connection and ask students to fill in names of people they consider a part of their circles and set goals for who they would like to include by the end of the year. Students get to decide where people fit in their circles and family may show up in the closest circle and may be further out for other students—the placement matters less than the process of thinking about relationships. As the lessons go on, we will be intentional about how all this fits together and will continue to point back to these Circles of Connection.

## LESSON GUIDE

Our first lesson is designed to be completed in two parts—the first, introducing Only7Seconds, loneliness and connection, taking the UCLA loneliness measure and developing a system for how your class will work together when engaging in these lessons. And secondly, utilizing the empathy lesson video, discussion questions, and connection challenges. Please consider breaking this lesson into two 45-minute sections for best results. Refer to this pacing guide for other considerations for planning.

**Part 1:** Share this information with your students:

Over the course of the next 9 lessons, we will be engaging with different stories to build our skills around connection. The goal is to help you feel more connected with people in your life, provide time for you to connect to yourself and opportunities to connect to others in your life. We are doing this because we know that connection and loneliness are intertwined. The more connected you feel, the less lonely you are. The stories will help you to develop empathy as you consider what others are experiencing. The expectation is for you to engage with the stories by having conversations about the information each storyteller shares. After the video, we will have an opportunity to connect personally and to intentionally reach out to others in our lives. We recognize that everyone has different relationships in their lives and while we place no judgement on which relationships mean the most, we do think it is vital that everyone has a team of people to call on when things get hard.

Each lesson, the pre-assessment form will be linked on the lesson page website. For easy access, students will be able to access the pre-assessments on [www.schools.only7seconds.com/students](http://www.schools.only7seconds.com/students).

### Take the pre-assessment.

This lesson our story and call to action are centered around your personal experience with loneliness and connection. Consider and reflect on how connected you are. What could you do to improve your connections with others? Who might you want to be more connected with? How can you help people around you feel more connected?

Create a list of questions that your class/group could use to check in with others in the class/community. Consider posting them in a common area. Here are some of our favorites:

- How are you really doing?
- How can I support you right now?
- What is something you need in life right now?
- I miss you, when can we hang out?
- What can I take off your plate?
- Do you want to talk about it?

### Hand out the Circles of Connection Sheet

Have students fill in the people in their life that first come to mind when they think about these different levels of influence and connection. Next, have them think about people they would like to add to the group by the end of the year and write their names in as well.

## LESSON GUIDE CONTINUED

### Create Connection Teams

Divide the class into groups with 2-4 students in each group and explain that this is their Connection Team/Accountability Partners for the times when you are engaging with this curriculum.

### Hand out the Connection Notes Sheet

Have the students complete the first box, Check In, on the Connection Notes Sheet. Help them develop a system to keep their papers organized so they can come back to them each lesson.

Discuss how they will interact as Accountability Partners/Connection Teams using the questions from the worksheet as a starting point: How are you feeling about working together to build empathy? What concerns do you have? What do you hope to get from this process?

**Part 2:** Introduce Kea as this lesson's storyteller. She owns a creative arts business and loves to run. She was a cross country runner in high school and college. Summer of her junior year in high school, she was diagnosed with bi-polar disorder. Her dream is to one day get a degree in art therapy and use her creative talents to help others!

### Show the Video and Discuss

Have students take brief notes in the second box, Video Notes, on the Connection Notes Sheet. These questions help the students to keep a focus on empathy as they watch the lesson. You can introduce them before the video and use them each lesson as a way for them to interact and take notes before getting into the discussion.

- What do you think the storyteller is feeling and how others in their life might react.
- If it was you, what help might you need?
- What would you want from your circle?
- How might you get that help?
- What can you take from this story that will help you build connections?

Watch the entire video all the way through and have a conversation using these questions or ones that make sense for your students. Remember, the objective for the video discussion is to build empathy.

- Start by asking, "Is there anyone in your life that this video makes you think about? Can you reach out and connect with them right now?"
- Allow time for students to text or call someone they are thinking about in this moment.
- Use the questions below to engage in a rich conversation with your students focusing on student engagement. Lead the conversation with the whole group or have small groups answer each question and then share their answers.
- It is vital that all students feel seen in this process so pay close attention to anyone responding in a way to the videos that is unexpected. Follow up with them after the discussion to ensure the video or conversation was not upsetting to them.

Play again, pausing for conversation within Connection Teams. After the teams discuss, consider debriefing as a class.

## LESSON GUIDE CONTINUED

At minute 1:25, pause and ask:

- What does it mean to you when you hear the word Connection? What about Loneliness?
- What do you think he means when he talks about intentional connections? Are there other kinds of connections?
- Who comes to mind when Luke talks about being encouraged to connect with people in your life and people you care about. When you think about those people, do you feel truly connected or is it more superficial?

At minute 2:20, pause and ask:

- As you consider loneliness in general or even a time when you have been lonely, what ways can human connection impact that feeling?

At the end, pause and discuss:

- What emotions come up for you when you hear Kea's story?
- What parts of her story, can you relate to? What parts are harder for you?
- If Kea was your best friend, how would you want to show up for her?
- How do you think Kea and her family feel about her sharing her story now?
- Kea talked about making decisions to take care of herself while putting others at a distance. And then once she was healthier, she was able to regroup. This seemed to be a great way for her to get the help she needed. We all have times when we are better than others, what are some ways that you have taken care of yourself? How do you recharge when you need to? How do you reset a friendship that has gone sideways?

### Allow time to Connect to Self

Allow time for your students to now connect with themselves and reflect on the conversation and video. Have them spend time thinking about and writing in box three, Connect to Self, on the Connection Notes Sheet. These questions are a starting place for students to think about when reflecting on how they connect with themselves.

- What emotions are you feeling?
- Are you feeling lonely in any part of your life?
- Is there something you need to talk to someone about that is sticking with you?
- Have you had a chance to exercise, reflect, and breathe today?
- How does your body feel?
- What thoughts are with you all the time?
- What brings you joy today?
- What are you worried about?

Remember, you can have students connect to self and others more often than when you are showing the video.

### Allow time to Connect to Circle

Have the students complete the last box, Connect to Circle, on the Connection Notes Sheet. Each lesson we want the students to think about the people in their lives and plan a way to connect. For this lesson since the Connection Challenge is a personal letter, the connection to their circle is an opportunity for them to share what they learned about Kea, the conversations from class or anything from Only7Seconds that has been interesting to them to this point.

## LESSON GUIDE CONTINUED

Each lesson, we ask you to engage in a Connection Challenge, beyond that the ongoing challenge is to build relationships and connections with the people in your circle—use these questions to plan how you will do that.

- How are you going to complete this lesson's connection challenge?
- Which relationship in your circle will you be working on?
- Who in your circle needs a check in?
- What do you need from someone in your circle?
- How did checking in help you feel?

### Complete the Connection Challenge

Provide the students with the template for the Dear Future Me letter. Have them spend time thinking about the prompts and responding to them in a thoughtful manner. Collect the letters and place in an envelope to share back with the students after the last video.

TO ACCESS THE VIDEO, SLIDES, LESSON  
MATERIALS, AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

**[WWW.SCHOOLS.ONLY7SECONDS.COM](http://WWW.SCHOOLS.ONLY7SECONDS.COM)**



STUDENTS CAN ACCESS THE PRE-ASSESSMENT FORMS AT:

**[WWW.SCHOOLS.ONLY7SECONDS.COM/STUDENTS](http://WWW.SCHOOLS.ONLY7SECONDS.COM/STUDENTS)**