

OBJECTIVE

Students will reflect on their background and history in order to connect with others with the same shared experiences.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Video and Lesson Guide
Circles of Connection Sheet, in student portfolio
Connection Notes: Month 4, 1 for each student
Connection Challenge: Name Tags, 1 for each student

RESOURCES

Slide Deck
Optional Teacher Connection Challenges
Communication Templates
Additional Connection Challenges for students

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

In study after study, research points to the fact that loneliness is bad for us—it is as dangerous as smoking, obesity, excess alcohol use and lack of exercise. Connection on the other hand is hardwired in our brains—our pre-frontal cortex actually lights up when we connect. And, over time we begin to narrow how we connect with others to protect ourselves.

As we purposefully build our connections, we build trust and opportunities that grow our relationships. It seems easy and straightforward, but it isn't. A lot of things get in the way of our ability to build lasting relationships. Everything from slight hurts to major trauma, grief, guilt and any other experience where we feel isolated.

We know that our natural inclination is to seek our connection when we need it, however, there is a growing body of research that points to this idea: that when we are lonely, we get stuck in a way of thinking that makes us repeat the cycle and stay disconnected.

As with anything else, the more we know, the more power we have over that thing. By exposing students to the idea that intentional connection is healthy (and can even be a deterrent for extreme isolation), and then building in the muscle memory of how to do that, we believe we can assist student in building a skill that will continue to help them.

The concept we are talking about can often be referred to as networking—building intentional relationships. Networking is not only good for potential jobs and opportunities, but it is also good for our mental and social health. When students know who they are and what they like to do, they can engage with others who share the same interests. This naturally creates opportunities for relationship and connection—something we all need.

LESSON GUIDE

Hand out the Connection Notes Sheet and have students get out the Circles & Notes pages from last month.

Begin with taking out the Connection Notes from last lesson and meet with their Connection Team to review the Connection Challenge from the previous lesson. Have them meet in the small groups of 2-4 from last lesson and talk about how they did with the hope notes. Were they successful? Were they surprised or confused by the reactions? Was there a pattern or theme to how people responded? After a small group discussion, share out as a class and then allow time to reflect by completing the first box, Check In, on the Connection Notes worksheet.

Take the pre-assessment.

This next lesson focuses on connecting with people in their interest groups to form deeper connections. It challenges students to move outside of their normal circles and purposefully expand their friendships and relationships.

Introduce Mac & Hailey as this month's storytellers. Mac & Hailey Potts grew up as musicians and music connected them. They ended up getting married and now they both do music full time. Mac is a blind recording artist and Hailey is a music teacher. While they have started a family and now have three kids, they still love to connect with each other and others through music!

Show the Video and Discuss

Have students take brief notes in the second box, Video Notes, on the Connection Notes Sheet from Month Three. Watch the entire video all the way through and have a conversation using these questions or ones that make sense for your students. You can pause before discussion and have students complete the questions on the notes page to give them time to process what they have heard.

- Then, 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 the 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 with the Connection Teams. After the teams discuss, consider debriefing as a class.

At minute 1:37, pause and reflect:

- Mac talks about the challenge of living separate lives between school and outside of school. He mentions being lonely by not fitting in. Everyone needs a sense of belonging and connection at some level and yet, everyone can relate to not always fitting in. Take a minute to think about a time where you did not fit in or you might have been an "outsider".

At minute 2:26, pause and ask:

- Mac shares how he found a creative way to use his extra-curricular interests to connect with classmates and his peers. What is a creative way that you can connect with your peers through your interests?

LESSON GUIDE CONTINUED

- Not everyone loves music (or blues!) like Mac did, YET he was able to still connect with people who were not passionate about music. Sometimes it is okay to be open to exploring new activities or interests that you are less familiar with and be curious. What is an activity or interest that you know nothing or little about, that you would like to learn more about? Is there someone you know that knows more about that activity/interest that you could ask more about it?

At the end, discuss:

- Hailey shared that while she was “with people” and even shared life with Mac and had a wonderful marriage... she still felt alone at times. It was sitting at a piano and getting her emotions out that she connected with herself and was able to help get all of her feelings out. What sort of activities or interests help express emotion and allow you to connect with your “true self”? If you aren’t participating in activities, think about what you might want to participate in!

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 for Month Four.

Introduce this month’s Connection Challenge

1. Have students create a name tag or sign that introduces themselves. Use the following template:
My name is _____. Grade _____. Interest (s) _____ (at least 1)
2. Find three people who have something you are interested in throughout the school day and introduce yourself.
3. Connect with people across grades, classes that are outside of your normal group or class.
4. Continue this lesson by randomly partnering students to have them share about their interests.

Share with students the information about how expanding your connections and developing relationships through shared interests or experiences provides another way to fill out the Connection Circles.

Allow time to Connect to Circle

Have the students complete the last box, Connect to Circle, on the Connection Notes Sheet for Month Four.

Additional Recommendation:

If printing name badges for this month's Connection Challenge:
print the template on Avery Name Badge 8395/25395.

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

WWW.SCHOOLS.ONLY7SECONDS.COM

