



FEELING CONNECTED FOR ADULTS

"Each contact with a human being is so rare, so precious, one should preserve it."

—Anais Nin

OVERVIEW

To help cultivate a sense of belonging at school, write about a time when you felt connected to a colleague and consider why you experienced that sense of connection.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Any time during the year
- In the morning, during prep time, during lunch, at the end of a school day
- When you are feeling stressed and overwhelmed
- Before or during a staff meeting

TIME REQUIRED

- 10 minutes

LEVEL

- Adult

MATERIALS

- A pen or pencil for writing (or a computer)

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

You will:

- Remember a time when you felt a strong connection with a colleague, write about what happened, and consider what made you feel connected to that person

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs](#)
- [Making a Practice Trauma-Informed](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools and Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Social Awareness

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- Find a quiet space for this exercise.
- Take a few deep breaths.
- Prepare yourself to recall moments of connection in your life.
- If you are leading this practice with a group, consider how the participants might respond. How can you prepare yourself to model and experience a sense of connectedness to your colleagues?

INSTRUCTIONS

PART 1

Try to think of a time when you felt a strong bond with a colleague at school. Choose a specific example of an experience you had with this person where you felt a strong sense of connection to them. This could be a time you had a meaningful conversation, gave or received support, experienced a great loss or success together, or witnessed an historic moment together.

PART 2

Once you've thought of a specific example, spend a few minutes writing about what happened. In particular, consider the ways in which this experience made you feel connected to the other person.

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- What were the most powerful emotions you experienced as you recalled a time when you connected to someone?

- How do you feel now?
- Do you sense a shift in your ability to reach out to your students and colleagues now?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Research suggests that reflecting on feelings of connection can increase our motivation to help others. In one [study](#), a group of people reflected on a time when they felt a strong bond with someone else while another group wrote about a time when they felt especially competent or autonomous. When comparing groups, the participants who reflected on their experience of closeness reported greater feelings of connectedness and concern for others.

So, when teachers reflect on times when they have felt a strong connection with others, they are potentially fueling their drive to practice kindness and compassion.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Feeling connected to others is considered to be a fundamental psychological need, so it's important for teachers to experience a sense of connectedness at school—just as much as students. In fact, [studies](#) indicate that teachers' view of their school climate can be linked to their job satisfaction and self-efficacy in the classroom. When teachers feel connected to their colleagues and good about their work, they are more likely to reach out to their students.

In other words, creating a sense of connectedness among staff may, have a school-wide ripple effect. Research tells us that a school's [organizational structure and practices](#) can influence adult connections with students (and their sense of school belonging). When students feel connected to their teachers, they report a greater sense of emotional well-being, which can ultimately affect their engagement with others as well as their [academic achievement](#).