

Your connection to community forms the foundation of your security and wellbeing. Everyone feels lonely sometimes, however chronic isolation harms mental and physical health. Remember, connection has less to do with the quantity of relationships, but rather the quality. Invest in building connections everyday.

Healthy Social Connection has many benefits:

- increased feelings of happiness
- longer lifespan
- protection from stress and anxiety
- helps regulate emotions
- boosts self-esteem
- keeps us and our communities safe

Start conversations by introducing yourself, standing up straight, speaking clearly and making eye contact, asking open-ended questions, offering compliments, and following up on shared interests. You can use your current context as an anchor (What did you think of the homework? How was your meal?) Find something in common to return to in the future, and extend an invitation.

Be willing to step out of your Comfort Zone - trying new things and talking to new people is a necessary step to building connection. Saying 'yes' to opportunities can be scary at first, but often pays off later.

When reaching out to others, be considerate of differences:

- **Don't assume! Remember that differences are often invisible.**
- **Practice inclusivity: extend invitations to diverse potential friends and focus on minimizing in-group bias.**
- **Plan inexpensive, accessible activities to include everyone.**
- **If unsure, ask respectfully, listen, and follow-up.**

Connect on Campus

Try these strategies to build connections on campus:

- **Minimize stress when out of your comfort zone by practicing self-compassion and having realistic expectations - being yourself is all you can do, and you will not connect with everyone. Remember making new friends is hard for most people. Persistence pays!**
- **Learn and use people's names, maintain appropriate eye contact, keep an open body stance (shoulders facing the person, don't cross your arms.)**
- **Invest in meeting your professors by introducing yourself after class, attending office hours and engaging in class discussions regularly.**
- **Try asking your existing friends to introduce you to new people.**
- **If you live off-campus, visit campus often and stay visible in public areas.**
- **Go beyond texting - call or visit in person to talk.**
- **Perform a random act of kindness for someone. Giving to others leads to a greater sense of connection for ourselves.**
- **Volunteer for a local organization or campus event.**
- **Start or join a interest group, fraternity or sorority, club or team. Visit Student Programs & Engagement to learn about opportunities on campus.**
- **Learn 3-5 people's names this week and one fact or something you have in common. Making even a small effort everyday will grow into success!**
- **Challenge yourself to 24 hours without social media. Connection happens in-person: excessive social media can be harmful! 'Likes' do not replace genuine connection. People often curate an unrealistic online persona.**
- **Take advantage of Bentley's variety of structured opportunities to connect beyond dorm and classroom life, such as becoming an orientation leader or RA, participating in Back to Bentley Weekend, Project Connect, the Falcon 40, and signing up for the Falcon Foundations Retreat.**