

Ability to show students the monthly video (www.everymondaymatters.org), if appropriate.

Prep time: 5 mins.



As this is the first Monday of the month, we recommend presenting this Monthly Kick-Off activity and if appropriate, the monthly video. Or, at a minimum, offer highlights from this activity plan.

MONTHLY KICK-OFF

1) SHARE THIS MONTH'S THEME WITH STUDENTS: **"MONDAY GETS CONNECTED"**

2) SHOW STUDENTS THE **"MONDAY GETS CONNECTED"** VIDEO.

- The **"MONDAY GETS CONNECTED"** video can be found at www.everymondaymatters.org. Click on **"MONTHLY VIDEOS"** on the homepage. Email us at edu@everymondaymatteers.org if you aren't able to access the video.

3) ASK A FEW OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO WARM STUDENTS UP ON THIS MONTH'S FOCUS:

***NOTE:** *Choose questions appropriate to your students' ages, grades, ability levels, and classroom goals. Students may share their answers in pairs, small groups, or as a large group.*

- **What does it mean to "GET CONNECTED"?**
 - Answer: To connect with others in meaningful ways
- **Do you enjoy "CONNECTING" with other people?**
- **Who are some people that you have strong "CONNECTIONS" with already?**
- **Is there anyone you want better "CONNECTIONS" with?**
- **Do you think "GETTING CONNECTED" is necessary to understand people better?**
 - Why or why not?
- **What are some ways to "GET CONNECTED" with others?**
- **Do you always have to live near someone to be "CONNECTED" with them?**
- **Do "CONNECTIONS" need to happen in real life, or are there other ways to "GET CONNECTED" with other people?**
- **Do you have friends that you love "CONNECTING" with?**
 - Why do you like "CONNECTING" with those friends?

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- **Do you ever need to step outside of your comfort zone to “CONNECT” with other people?**
 - What is that like?
 - **Do you think you can use social media for real and meaningful “CONNECTIONS”?**
 - Why or why not?
 - **What happens when you are present with the people you’re with?**
 - Are you able to “CONNECT” with them in a more meaningful way?
 - **What are some reasons to “GET CONNECTED”?**
 - **Why is it important to “GET CONNECTED” in life?**
 - **How can “GETTING CONNECTED” show you that YOU MATTER?**
 - **How can “CONNECTING” with other people can show them that they MATTER?**
 - **How can “CONNECTING” with others in your community show us all that WE MATTER?**
 - **What might the world be like if we all “GOT CONNECTED” more often?**
 - How might the world grow and change in positive ways?

4) SHARE THE MONTHLY SITUATION AND CHALLENGE (PAGE 3) WITH STUDENTS BY READING IT OUT LOUD OR ASKING A STUDENT TO DO SO:

- Consider having students use this information as the foundation for a writing prompt. Let them form their own questions or provide them one or two to answer, using the challenge that lies ahead of them for the month

5) CONSIDER SHARING THE MONTHLY FACTS (PAGES 4-7) WITH STUDENTS.

- This can be done now or throughout the month
- The MONTHLY FACTS are an integrated learning tool for you to use, as desired and appropriate

6) SHARE THE UPCOMING WEEKLY THEMES WITH STUDENTS.

- Monday, February 4 - “FIND YOUR POSSE”
- Monday, February 11 - “STEP OUT & OUTSIDE”
- Monday, February 18 - “SOCIALIZE GOODNESS”
- Monday, February 25 - “BE PRESENT”

7) GET STUDENTS EXCITED ABOUT MAKING FEBRUARY ALL ABOUT “MONDAY GETS CONNECTED” AND SEEING HOW CONNECTION AND STRONG, HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS CAN MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE IN THEIR LIVES AND THE LIVES OF OTHERS, BOTH NOW AND IN THE FUTURE.

8) ENJOY THE FIRST WEEK’S THEME AND ACTIVITIES: “FIND YOUR POSSE”

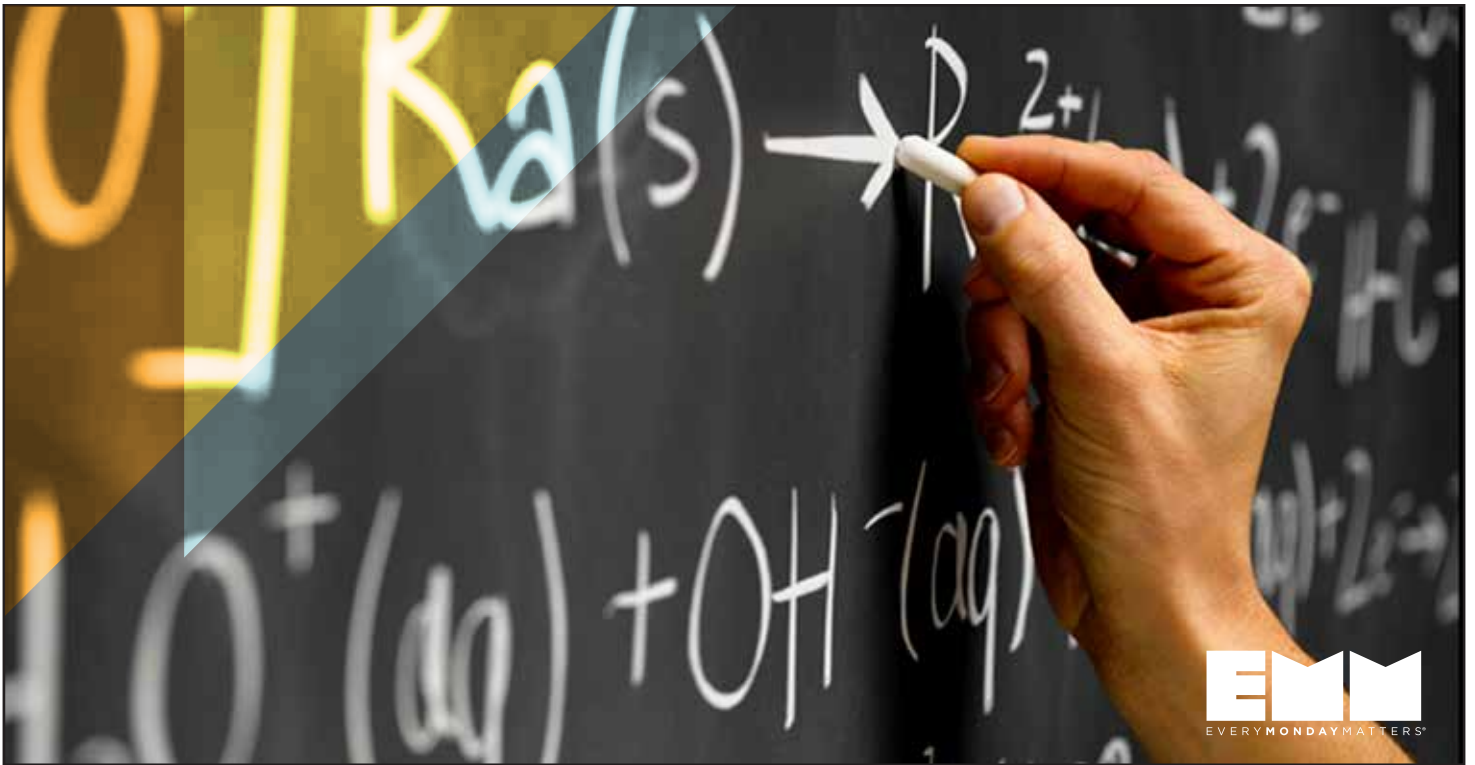


THE SITUATION

It's nice to be connected with other people. But have you thought about how connection is actually necessary? That connecting with others is really, really good for us? We're not meant to live life alone, but it's really easy to feel alone in today's world. We might feel like we have a lot of friends—in person or on social media—but we can still feel lonely. Connection isn't always easy, but it is worth it. Humans are designed to be in relationship with one another, and relationships are where we can find a lot of joy in life. This month, we're going to spend time GETTING CONNECTED with others. We'll see what good connection does for each and every one of us—and our communities. Let's get connected.

THE CHALLENGE

It might seem easy to get connected. Sometimes it is. Connections can come easy for us sometimes, but other times they take work. This month, we're going to examine what it takes to get connected with others, and not just on a surface level. We'll look at how we can connect in really meaningful ways. We'll put our phones down for a little bit and connect in real life and real time. Then we'll pick them back up and see how we can use social media for good. We'll find ways to connect in new spaces and places, and see how we can find those friends that mean the world to us. This month, we'll honor the relationships we have and the ones we are creating. Why are we doing all of this? Because getting connected matters.



MONTHLY FACTS

CONNECTED (ADJECTIVE):

1. JOINED OR LINKED TOGETHER
2. HAVING SOCIAL, PROFESSIONAL, OR COMMERCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

-merriam-webster.com

YOUR FRIEND GETS YOUR JOKE. YOUR CO-WORKER OFFERS CONGRATS. YOUR SPOUSE HUGS YOU HELLO. THEY ARE ALL HELPING YOU BUST STRESS AND BOOST WELL-BEING. IN FACT, MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA FOUND THAT 71 PERCENT OF PEOPLE SURVEYED TURNED TO FRIENDS OR FAMILY IN TIMES OF STRESS. HUMANS ARE SOCIAL ANIMALS: WE CRAVE FEELING SUPPORTED, VALUED AND CONNECTED. RESEARCH [ON] THE BENEFITS OF SOCIAL CONNECTION [INCLUDE]:

- **INCREASED HAPPINESS.** IN ONE COMPELLING STUDY, A KEY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VERY HAPPY PEOPLE AND LESS-HAPPY PEOPLE WAS GOOD RELATIONSHIPS.
- **BETTER HEALTH.** LONELINESS WAS ASSOCIATED WITH A HIGHER RISK OF HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE IN A RECENT STUDY OF OLDER PEOPLE.
- **A LONGER LIFE.** PEOPLE WITH STRONG SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY TIES WERE TWO TO THREE TIMES LESS LIKELY TO DIE DURING A 9-YEAR STUDY.

SOMETIMES CONNECTION IS A HEART-TO-HEART, SPILL-IT-ALL-OUT TALK. BUT SOMETIMES IT'S JUST A LAUGH-OUT-LOUD E-MAIL.

-Connect with Others; Mental Health America

GOOD FRIENDS ARE OPEN, GENUINE AND HONEST WITH EACH OTHER. THEY TOLERATE EACH OTHER'S FRAILTIES, APPRECIATE THEIR DIFFERENCES, AND HONESTLY CRITICIZE WHEN NECESSARY. OVER MANY YEARS, THEY PARTICIPATE IN EACH OTHER'S CELEBRATIONS AND MARRIAGES, AND IN THEIR CHILDREN'S AND GRANDCHILDREN'S MILESTONES. THEY ARE THERE FOR EACH OTHER DURING ILLNESSES AND SETBACKS,

AND SOME ARE LEFT TO MOURN THE LOSSES OF THEIR DEAR OLD FRIENDS, ALMOST AS A LOSS OF A PART OF THEMSELVES... SIMPLY PUT, GOOD FRIENDSHIPS ARE SOME OF THE BEST STUFF OF LIFE.

-Levine, Saul; The Importance of Friendship; Psychology Today; February 2016

BELOW ARE SOME OF THE ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF FRIENDSHIP.

- 1. ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT.** FRIENDS ARE ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT DURING TIMES OF CRISIS AND TURBULENCE. IF YOU FIND YOURSELF GOING THROUGH A HARD TIME, HAVING A FRIEND TO HELP YOU THROUGH CAN MAKE THE TRANSITION EASIER.
- 2. SELF-ESTEEM.** HAVING FRIENDS YOU CAN RELY ON CAN HELP TO BOOST YOUR SELF-ESTEEM. ON THE OTHER HAND, A LACK OF FRIENDS CAN LEAVE YOU FEELING LONELY AND WITHOUT SUPPORT, WHICH MAKES YOU VULNERABLE FOR OTHER PROBLEMS SUCH AS DEPRESSION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE. HAVING AT LEAST ONE PERSON YOU CAN RELY ON WILL HELP TO BUILD YOUR CONFIDENCE.
- 3. KEEPING YOU ACTIVE.** IF YOU SPEND A SOLITARY LIFE, IT IS MUCH EASIER TO BE RETICENT ABOUT PARTICIPATING IN REGULAR ACTIVITIES SUCH AS SPORTS, CLUBS, AND HOBBIES. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF YOU HAVE AT LEAST ONE FRIEND, YOU WILL BE MORE LIKELY TO GET OUT AND START DOING THINGS. THAT FRIEND MAY ALSO SUGGEST ACTIVITIES THAT YOU WOULD NOT HAVE CONSIDERED ON YOUR OWN—THUS, PUSHING YOU OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE TO CHALLENGE YOUR ANXIETY.
- 4. POSITIVE INFLUENCE.** IN ADDITION TO NEGATIVE PEER PRESSURE, FRIENDS CAN ALSO PROVIDE A POSITIVE INFLUENCE. IF YOU MAKE FRIENDS WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE GENEROUS WITH THEIR TIME, HELP OTHERS, AMBITIOUS, OR FAMILY-ORIENTED, YOU ARE MORE LIKELY TO DEVELOP THOSE VALUES YOURSELF. HAVING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THESE TYPES OF PEOPLE WILL ALSO IMPROVE YOUR SOCIAL FUNCTIONING IN GENERAL.

-Cuncic, Arlin; 4 Reasons Friendships Are So Important; Very Well Mind; December 2018

NEED SOME FRESH AIR AND OUTDOOR ADVENTURE? IF YOU'RE LOOKING TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE BUT ARE HAVING TROUBLE COMING UP WITH A PLAN, WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED. READ ON FOR 15 FUN THINGS TO DO OUTSIDE WITH FRIENDS!

- 1. HAVE A SCAVENGER HUNT**
- 2. PLANT A VEGETABLE GARDEN**
- 3. PLAY TOURIST IN YOUR OWN TOWN**
- 4. GO HORSEBACK RIDING**
- 5. VISIT AN AMUSEMENT PARK**
- 6. PLAN A PICNIC**
- 7. VOLUNTEER**
- 8. STARGAZE**
- 9. GET CREATIVE WITH SIDEWALK CHALK**
- 10. TAKE A HIKE**
- 11. FIND AN OUTDOOR WORKOUT**
- 12. TAKE IN A SUNSET OR SUNRISE**
- 13. HAVE A WATER BALLOON FIGHT**
- 14. HOLD A GARAGE SALE**
- 15. GO MINIATURE GOLFING**

-Pennell, Julie; 15 Fun Things To Do Outside, No Matter Where You Live; Teen Vogue; November 2017

FOR A FEW YEARS, MANY TEENS HAVE BEEN SAYING THAT SOCIAL MEDIA – DESPITE ITS FLAWS – IS MOSTLY POSITIVE. AND NEW RESEARCH IS SHEDDING LIGHT ON THE GOOD THINGS THAT CAN HAPPEN WHEN KIDS CONNECT, SHARE AND LEARN ONLINE. AS KIDS BEGIN TO USE TOOLS SUCH AS INSTAGRAM, SNAPCHAT, TWITTER AND EVEN YOUTUBE IN EARNEST, THEY’RE LEARNING THE RESPONSIBILITY THAT COMES WITH THE POWER TO BROADCAST TO THE WORLD... FOR INSPIRATION, HERE ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF [CHILDREN] BEING SOCIAL-MEDIA-SAVVY:

- **IT LETS THEM DO GOOD.** TWITTER, FACEBOOK AND OTHER LARGE SOCIAL NET WORKS EXPOSE KIDS TO IMPORTANT ISSUES AND PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. KIDS REALIZE THEY HAVE A VOICE THEY DIDN’T HAVE BEFORE AND ARE DOING EVERYTHING FROM CROWDFUNDING SOCIAL JUSTICE PROJECTS TO ANONYMOUSLY TWEETING POSITIVE THOUGHTS.
- **IT STRENGTHENS FRIENDSHIPS.** STUDIES, INCLUDING COMMON SENSE MEDIA’S “SOCIAL MEDIA, SOCIAL LIFE: HOW TEENS VIEW THEIR DIGITAL LIVES” AND THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER’S “TEENS, TECHNOLOGY AND FRIENDSHIPS” SHOW THAT SOCIAL MEDIA HELPS TEENAGERS MAKE FRIENDS AND KEEP THEM.
- **IT CAN OFFER A SENSE OF BELONGING.** WHILE HEAVY SOCIAL MEDIA USE CAN ISOLATE KIDS, A STUDY CONDUCTED BY GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY AND THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND IN AUSTRALIA FOUND THAT ALTHOUGH AMERICAN TEENS HAVE FEWER FRIENDS THAN THEIR HISTORICAL COUNTERPARTS, THEY ARE LESS LONELY THAN TEENS IN PAST DECADES. THEY REPORT FEELING LESS ISOLATED AND HAVE BECOME MORE SOCIALLY ADEPT, PARTLY BECAUSE OF AN INCREASE IN TECHNOLOGY USE.
- **IT PROVIDES GENUINE SUPPORT.** ONLINE ACCEPTANCE – WHETHER A KID IS INTERESTED IN AN UNUSUAL SUBJECT THAT ISN’T CONSIDERED COOL OR IS GRAPPLING WITH SEXUAL IDENTITY – CAN VALIDATE A MARGINALIZED CHILD. SUICIDAL TEENS CAN EVEN GET IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO QUALITY SUPPORT ONLINE.
- **IT HELPS THEM EXPRESS THEMSELVES.** THE POPULARITY OF FAN FICTION (ORIGINAL STORIES BASED ON EXISTING MATERIAL THAT PEOPLE WRITE AND UPLOAD ONLINE) PROVES HOW STRONG THE DESIRE IS FOR SELF-EXPRESSION... DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY ALLOWS KIDS TO SHARE THEIR WORK WITH A WIDER AUDIENCE AND EVEN COLLABORATE WITH FAR-FLUNG PARTNERS (AN ESSENTIAL 21ST-CENTURY SKILL). IF THEY’RE REALLY SERIOUS, SOCIAL MEDIA CAN PROVIDE ESSENTIAL FEEDBACK FOR KIDS TO HONE THEIR CRAFT.

-Knorr, Caroline; Five Ways Social Media Can Be Good for Teens; The Washington Post; March 2018.

10 WAYS TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR GOOD:

- 1. ORGANIZE A LOCAL SERVICE PROJECT**
- 2. START A FOOD DRIVE FOR YOUR LOCAL FOOD BANK**
- 3. ASK FOR DONATIONS OF SCHOOL SUPPLIES FOR A LOCAL HOMELESS SHELTER SERVING FAMILIES**
- 4. RAISE AWARENESS OF A CAUSE LIKE SUICIDE PREVENTION**
- 5. SPREAD THE WORD OF WHAT’S ALREADY HAPPENING**
- 6. FOLLOW YOUR LOCAL POLITICIANS AND CANDIDATES**
- 7. STAY CONNECTED TO YOUR CITY**
- 8. HASHTAG IT**
- 9. SIGN MY PETITION**
- 10. GO VIRAL WITH YOUR MESSAGE**

-10 Ways to Use Social Media for Good; www.getschooled.com

MINDFULNESS MEANS MAINTAINING A MOMENT-BY-MOMENT AWARENESS OF OUR THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, BODILY SENSATIONS, AND SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT, THROUGH A GENTLE, NURTURING LENS. MINDFULNESS ALSO INVOLVES ACCEPTANCE, MEANING THAT WE PAY ATTENTION TO OUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS WITHOUT JUDGING THEM—WITHOUT BELIEVING, FOR INSTANCE, THAT THERE’S A “RIGHT” OR “WRONG” WAY TO THINK OR FEEL IN A GIVEN MOMENT. WHEN WE PRACTICE MINDFULNESS, OUR THOUGHTS TUNE INTO WHAT WE’RE SENSING IN THE PRESENT MOMENT RATHER THAN REHASHING THE PAST OR IMAGINING THE FUTURE.

-What Is Mindfulness?; Greater Good Magazine

LIFE CAN PASS BY AT A DIZZYING PACE. IF WE AREN'T CONSCIOUS OF BEING PRESENT, WE CAN MISS A LOT IN THE MOMENT. MINDFULNESS DICTATES WE DO THE OPPOSITE. BY BEING PRESENT, WE SEE OPPORTUNITY. MINDFULNESS ALSO ALLOWS US TO ENJOY SACRED MOMENTS WITH OUR LOVED ONES, AND RESULTS IN LESS STRESS AND MORE REJUVENATION. BUT HOW DO YOU SLOW DOWN IN A WORLD THAT URGES YOU TO KEEP UP WITH ITS DISORIENTING SPEED? HERE ARE SIX SUGGESTIONS TO PRACTICE MORE PRESENCE.

- 1. BREATHE CONSCIOUSLY**
- 2. CONCENTRATE ON ONE SENSE**
- 3. STOP MULTI-TASKING**
- 4. ESTABLISH TECH-FREE TIMES**
- 5. LEARN TO SAY NO TO THINGS THAT DON'T BRING YOU JOY**
- 6. PRACTICE LISTENING AND EYE-CONTACT**

-Sam, F. Emelia; 6 Simple Ways To Be More Present In Your Relationships; Mind Body Green