

Fostering Wellness Exercise

Things in Common

Time Required: *5 minutes*

The way in which we connect with other people helps mold the way in which we think about ourselves. When we meet new people, our default mode is to look for the differences. Looking for the differences has become commonplace, even manifesting in children’s games—which one of these is not like the rest? *Our social connectedness, however, can strengthen our happiness.* In this exercise, you will work on connecting with someone you may not know so well.

Move around & *settle down next to someone who you do not know very well.*

Spend the next 5 minutes talking to this person to discover some things that you have in common. There are obvious similarities which don’t even have to be spoken, for example, we are both in same profession, we are both males, we both have brown hair and brown eyes, etc. Try to skip over those superficial things you have in common. Take some time to find out if you have been in similar places, enjoy the same hobbies, have the same career goals, like similar food, music or sports. etc. *Find up to 5 things that you have in common.*

Share your similarities with the group so that they may feel more connected to you as well, or so that you can help foster a new friendship founded on the qualities and experiences you just discovered. ¹²³

¹ “Shared Identity.” Greater Good in Action: Science-Based Practices for a Meaningful Life. University of California, Berkeley. 2017. <https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/shared_identity>

² Levine, M., Prosser, A., Evans, D., & Reicher, S. (2005). “Identity and emergency intervention: How social group membership and inclusiveness of group boundaries shape helping behavior.” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31(4), 443-453.

³ Leary, M. R., Tipsord, J. M., & Tate, E. B. (2008). “Allo-inclusive identity: Incorporating the social and natural worlds into one's sense of self.” In H. A. Wayment & J. J. Bauer (Eds.). *Transcending self-interest: Psychological explorations of the quiet ego* (pp. 137-147). Washington: APA.