# The importance of...
# CONNECTEDNESS

The feeling of warmth and appreciation that arises when people around us show that they care about us is called connectedness. This feeling can come from the contact we make with those around us, including society, our neighbors, fellow students, teachers, and others. Also, by showing empathy and understanding the experiences of others, we strengthen the bonds that bind us together and contribute to a sense of community and solidarity. Connectedness is as essential as water and food; it is a deep-seated human need that supports our well-being and personal growth. It gives us strength in difficult situations because we know we are not alone.

## Connectedness consists of two things

## Meaningful relationships

- Platonic relationships, romantic relationships, familial relationships or relationships with fellow students
- The better the quality of your relationships, the stronger your sense of connection with your surroundings is.
- Quality > Amount of relationships
- Quality relationships consist of **mutual empathy** and **intimacy**.
- Created by the nice things you do for others e.g.:
  - Babysitting for your neighbours, giving someone a ride, watering the plants for a family member that's on vacation,...

## Solidarity

- Feeling **connected to a particular group**, such as your soccer team, dance club, student organization, culture,....
- This translates into **social** and **community involvement**
- You gain a sense of unity with others and peace with society.
- Comes from **social commitment**, e.g.:
  - Volunteering
  - Political movement
  - ...

## Not enough connectedness?

If you often feel alone, no matter how many friends you have, we speak of **loneliness**. This may be because you feel little connection to the people around you and/or society.

**How do you recognize this?**
- Do you experience a strong sense of missing deep relationships with others?
- Do you feel like you are alone?
- Have you been experiencing these feelings for a while?

**Keep reading** for tips on building relationships that are meaningful to you.

# GET TO WORK

## BUILD MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

### 1 PREPARE YOURSELF

**WHAT** is a good opening line?

**WHEN** can you make contact?

**WHERE** can you strike up a conversation?

**WHO** can you easily approach?

**HOW** best to address someone?

### 2 TAKE INITIATIVE

- Ask open-ended questions
- Get to know the other person with curiousity
- Find common interests
- Listen to the other person
- Remain authentically yourself

### 3 END THE CONVERSATION

- End positively
  - Eg: give a compliment, say goodbye enthusiastically,....
- Exchange contact information
- Suggest a next meet-up

## Commit yourself to a social cause

Doing good for others can also be **good for yourself**! Thus, it can provide a sense of purpose for yourself and unity with others.

↘ Take a look at the available volunteering positions in Flanders on vrijwilligerswerk.be

↘ Find your purpose in one of the five areas of The World Needs You, where you can work for a better world at VUB.

## Are things not going well and are you in need of...

📞 **...a chat?**
- Contact CHS Belgium (chsbelgium.org)
- Call, chat or email the suicide hotline 1813

🫱 **...mental support?**
- Make an appointment with a student psychologist
- Contact BRUCC
- Contact JAC/CAW (website only available in Dutch)