

Stage 2 & 3 | Ages 8-12 yrs

**Mental Health Month Challenge – A Little Connection Goes a Long Way**

Teacher: ***This challenge will help us better understand ourselves, other people and nature. The way we connect with others and with nature is an important part of our wellbeing.***

This activity has two parts.

**Part 1:** Class creates a **Connection Sculpture** (60 mins)

**Part 2:** Class undertakes the **Connection Challenge** (20 mins introduction, 20 mins mid challenge catch up + 1 week to carry out challenge).

**1 Connection Sculpture**

Teacher provides each student 3-5 pipe cleaners/ chenille sticks. Teacher invites each student to these to **create a shape** to represent them. The students will then join their shapes together to make a sculpture collage representing the class. Teacher invites a discussion of **shape ideas**, circle, heart, twist, animal, star, colour, etc.

Students create their shape and then **join their shape** to their classmates at their table group, then they join their combined shapes with those of another table group.

The larger joined shapes are further combined to **form the class collage sculpture**. The artwork could take the form of a framed 3D picture, or a hanging mobile etc.

**2** Teacher invites students to discuss- *How did you join the pieces together?* Suggestions may include how they joined two shapes together (with an extra pipe cleaner, creating a loop on both shapes etc, joining similar sized shapes or colour or looking for contrasts, etc).

*What did it feel like to join two pieces, then four, then six? etc.* Suggestions may include: joining them together makes them stronger. Joining them makes them look impressive.

“How does our sculpture represent us both as individuals and as a group?” Students may suggest each piece represents one person but looking at the sculpture together we are made up of a lot of different pieces, connected together.

**3 Connection Challenge**

Teacher: *Our connection with each other is important for our wellbeing. This week we are taking a challenge for this year's Mental Health Month. We have a list of challenges to choose from. Some of the challenges relate to connection to other people and some relate to connection to nature.*

Teacher reads out the individual MHM Connection Challenges (A4 printout/digital file).

Teacher invites students to choose two of the challenges and then select one of these to do over the coming week.

Teacher: This week we are going to complete one of the connection challenges we selected. We'll have a check in mid week to see how we're going.

**4 Mid-week check in:** *“How are we going with our connection challenges?”* Suggestions might include, I forgot, I'll do it tomorrow, I did it and it made me feel good, I think I surprised the person, etc.

**5 On the final day of the challenge,** Teacher invites students to share their experience of connection – either about the class made connection artwork, or the connection challenge with another person or nature.

## Connection Challenge

- **Give someone a compliment** – You could say something you noticed like: *“Your teamwork was great on that task; You were so helpful; You made a lot of effort with that artwork etc”*
- **Focus on the positive**– take notice of the little things, the sun shining, a rainbow, a cool breeze, your friend waving, a delicious meal and *tell someone about it.*
- Learn something about your own or **someone else’s culture**– *ask about their favourite recipe, how to say Hi...*
- **Celebrate small wins**–solving a problem, finishing something tough, asking for help. You could say, *proud of you for getting through that, you worked hard on that- good job*
- **Ask someone**, *What was one thing that went well today?*

- **Kindness challenge**, do one kind thing for someone without being asked. Maybe open a door for them, offer to help, say hello, hold a place for them etc
- **Help someone out**: offer to help with work, packing up, or explaining something.



**Say thank you**, notice a helper – thank them for something they do (e.g. librarian, classmate, teacher, cleaner, etc).

- **Notice the good**: tell someone what you think they did really well today.
- **Do something for yourself**–have a bubble bath, dance, sing, go for walk or a run. You can bring more to your connection with others when you care for yourself.

## Connection to Nature Challenge

(during lunch break or after school)



- **Look at the sky** for one minute and notice clouds, colours, movement.
- When outside, think of **five** things you can see, **four** things you can hear, **three** things you can touch, **two** things you can smell and **one** thing you can taste.
- Sit quietly for 2 minutes outside and **count how many** bird sounds you hear or count how many birds you can see.
- **Create a picture** from objects you collect from your garden- leaves, flowers, buds, twigs, bark and stones or objects you collect at the beach- sand, shells, driftwood, leaves.



- **Count** how many different types of trees in your street. What makes them different- leaves, bark, scent, seeds, flowers etc
- **Stand still** in a place in nature like the school oval, a local park, your backyard or a nature reserve and count how many different colours you can see in nature.
- When you are outside, **find something** that is:
  - green
  - soft
  - smooth
  - rough
  - tiny