

Belonging

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We are social beings and social connection is important for adults and children alike. While we are all limited in the contact we can have with our peers and family due to school shutdowns and social distancing, continuing to nurture our existing relationships has never been more important. It is not uncommon for teenagers to feel disconnected from their community. Some children may also struggle to form meaningful connections during adolescence and this can be even more challenging because of Covid-19 and the current climate.

This activity will give your child an opportunity to think about who is in their network and what they can do to maintain their relationships and build new relationships with others. As a parent, by encouraging and nurturing your **child's relationships with others you can help them** feel safe, needed and part of a community.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THIS ACTIVITY

During this activity your child will be challenged to think about who is already in their network and be creative about how they can increase their sense of belonging and relationships with others.

Encourage your child to complete the attached worksheet.

Strategies to increase belonging during Covid-19

Belonging needs effort! Strengthen existing connections or make new ones by trying the following:

- Call a friend or loved one for a chat (you may also like to set up regular video chats. Seeing faces can help increase connection)
- Spend time connecting with the people you live with
- Join in on conversations around you
- Join a team sport or activity that you enjoy
- Spend time with people close to you (e.g., family and old friends – these relationships need work too!)
- Volunteer your time to help others
- Cooperate and work with others – this means being respectful towards others when solving problems or conflicts



WHAT IF MY CHILD HAS LOTS OF NEGATIVE EMOTIONS THEY AREN'T SURE HOW TO DEAL WITH?

- Reassure them that it's natural to respond this way given the current challenges we all face.
- Encourage them to keep talking with you about how they're feeling. Sometimes, strong emotions can be alleviated just by letting them out and talking.
- Don't feel like you need to solve anything right away. Just listen at first.
- If your child would like assistance, help them find solutions to the cause of their feelings (e.g. If it's loneliness, help them make connections with friends or family. If it's sadness, find time for activities that bring joy. If it's anxiety, help them to see the issue from a different perspective).
- Seek additional help if you think you need it.

If you feel your son needs further help and you wish to discuss the services the school counsellor can provide, **please see your son's homeroom teacher or Amos Pilgrim** amos.pilgrim@medbury.school.nz. The school counsellor, Jenelle Hooson, is a Registered Provisional Member with NZAC (New Zealand Association of Counsellors).

Here are some support options specifically for young people aged between 5 and 25:

- [Need to Talk?](#) Free call or text 1737 any time to speak to a trained counsellor, for any reason
- [Youthline](#): 0800 376 633 (24/7), or free text 234 (8am-12am), or email talk@youthline.co.nz
- [What's Up](#): online chat (7pm-10pm) or 0800 WHATSUP / 0800 9428 787 children's helpline (12pm-11pm weekdays, 3pm-11pm weekends)
- [Kidsline](#) (ages 5-18): 0800 543 754 (24/7 but between 4pm and 9pm calls are answered by a Kidsline Buddy, specially-trained year 12 and 13 students)

Further resources to help parents support their children during this time:

<https://www.allright.org.nz/>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/>

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