

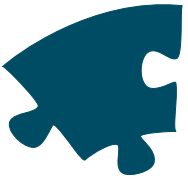


Building Meaningful Connections at Work

We spend much of our waking lives at work, but many of us have only superficial relationships there. That contributes to a broader loneliness epidemic that weighs us down and can even shorten lifespans. Connecting with colleagues doesn't always happen easily, but the effort can benefit individuals and the organization, and make work more productive and fun. Here are some simple ways to get started.



Say their name. When you meet someone, listen closely as they introduce themselves. Say their name correctly, and make a mental note of how to pronounce it. When you do this, you acknowledge the person just as they are from the beginning of your relationship.



Commit to connect. Our busy, sometimes introverted routines can create barriers to meaningful connection. Block time on your calendar to invite a colleague to a 30-minute coffee, walk, or no-agenda Zoom.



Deepen the connections you have. Do some co-workers always energize you? Do you look forward to sharing ideas with them in meetings? Shoot them a quick note to say so. Hearing that they helped you acclimate to a new role or work through an idea could be just the pick-me-up they need—and lead to even more meaningful interactions with them in the future.



Lead with curiosity. Not sure what to talk about with colleagues? Get curious. Ask what they're working on, what interests them most about their work, what their biggest challenge is. You can discuss topics beyond work if you like, as long as your colleague's willing, but you don't have to.



Take small steps. If a 30-minute coffee with a colleague intimidates you, start by using the time before meetings to ask someone what they're looking forward to this week, what they're bingeing on TV or Netflix, or how they celebrated finishing a big project.



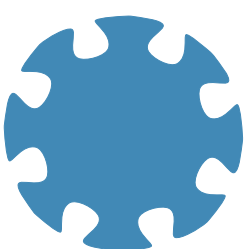
Don't fake it. Make sure you're willing and able to follow through before you make plans with a co-worker. If you typically spend lunch hour caring for a family member, don't stress yourself out trying to set a ton of lunch dates with colleagues. If you're reserved, don't push yourself to gush your way through an interaction. Most people will respond to your authentic self—and won't respond to your inauthentic self.



Focus on them. When you interact with your co-workers, don't scroll your phone or direct your attention elsewhere. Make your colleague the focus of your attention for that moment.



Listen. Most people have room to improve at this skill, and it's one of the most effective ways to make sure people enjoy the time they spend around you. When you listen, don't think about how you will respond. Just let people tell you what they have to say, and react honestly without judgment.



Set the tone. Managers, make time during meetings for employees to share something about themselves beyond their workload. Create a meeting ritual that resonates with your team—maybe you have one employee ask the others a question, or you ask the group to name one thing they're grateful for this week.



Helpful Resources.

[How to Build the Social Ties You need at Work - Harvard Business Review](#)

[9 Ways to Create Stronger, More Meaningful, and Longer-Lasting Relationships at Work - The Muse](#)

[8 Ways to Build Strong Relationships in the Workplace - Indeed](#)