



MOVEMENT CONNECTION

Seeing & Being Seen

RESOURCE FOR
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PARTICIPANTS



Connection Begins with Subtle Movement

WHAT ROLE DOES CONNECTION PLAY IN YOUR MOVEMENT EXPERIENCE?

When we think about movement, we often imagine activities that raise our heart rate:

- walking
- exercising
- dancing
- swimming
- playing sports
- stretching

But some of the most important movements in our lives happen long before we begin exercising. Think about what happens when we connect with another person.

We might:

- look up and make eye contact
- smile
- wave
- lean toward someone
- open our posture
- step aside to make room for another person
- turn toward someone to listen attentively

Although small in magnitude, the impact of changing our relative body positions can be big. These are movements may not raise our heart rate, but they often touch our hearts.

Our bodies continuously communicate messages such as:

"I see you."

"You are welcome."

"I am interested."

"You belong here."

When these invitations are received in a group physical activity context, movement experiences often become more enjoyable, meaningful, and sustainable.



Connection Begins with Subtle Movement

WHAT ROLE DOES CONNECTION PLAY IN YOUR MOVEMENT EXPERIENCE?

Many people say they join activities because of the health benefits. Yet when asked why they return, they often talk about:

- familiar faces
- friendships
- welcoming instructors
- shared routines
- feeling remembered
- feeling missed when absent
- a sense of belonging

As one participant in our InterActive for Life research shared:

I found a social connection in the exercise class was the best in the beginning, because you always see so many different people and say hi to them.

This feeling of being seen lingers well beyond the beginning of class. Meaningful connection develops when people notice who is not there.

When regular participants return to a class they hear

Where were you? We missed you. It's so nice to have you back in class.

Connection is not something that only happens after movement.

Connection is something we can actively create. For more examples see the YouTube video: ["Joy in Active Aging"](#)

Connection Challenge

The next time you participate in an activity, ask yourself:

"What helps me feel seen?"

Then ask:

"What can I do to help someone else feel seen?"



Participant Activities

TO INSPIRE MOVEMENT CONNECTION

1

The Hello Challenge

At your next activity, challenge yourself to acknowledge at least three people. You might:

- smile
- wave
- say hello
- introduce yourself
- learn a name
- welcome a newcomer

Reflection

How did these small movements of connection influence your experience?

Participant Activities

TO INSPIRE MOVEMENT CONNECTION

2 Take Up Space

Making connections is an active process. Sometimes we stay at the edges, avoid conversation, or wait for others to approach us.

Challenge

Today, try one small action that helps you be seen:

- sit somewhere different
- join a conversation
- introduce yourself
- share an idea
- ask a question
- participate in a discussion

Reflection

What happened when you gave yourself permission to be more visible?



Participant Activities

TO INSPIRE MOVEMENT CONNECTION

3 Learn One New Name

Many of us stay within familiar circles.

While those relationships matter, connection grows when we remain open to new people.

Challenge - Learn One New Name

Learning names is a skill that gets stronger with practice.

Learn the name of one new person today.

To help remember it:

- Repeat their name when you meet them.
- Use their name once more before you leave.
- Connect their name to something you noticed about them.

For example:

"Nice to meet you, Alex."

"See you next time, Alex."

Don't worry if you forget their name the next time you see them.

Every time you ask someone's name again, you're really saying:

"You matter enough for me to keep trying."

Bonus Challenge

The next time you see them, greet them by name before they greet you.

A remembered name is one of the simplest ways to help someone feel seen, welcomed, and valued.

Take it a step further by:

- asking them a question
- learning something about them



Participant Activities

TO INSPIRE MOVEMENT CONNECTION

4

Notice Your Connection Signals

During an activity, pay attention to the ways your body communicates. Examples include:

- eye contact
- posture
- facial expressions
- gestures

Challenge

Focus on one of these "connection signals" during your activity.

Reflection

How did the person beside you respond? What worked? What might you do differently next time?

Participant Activities

TO INSPIRE MOVEMENT CONNECTION

5

Notice Who Is There

Look around during an activity.

Notice:

- familiar faces
- new participants
- instructors
- volunteers
- people sitting quietly
- people standing alone

Challenge

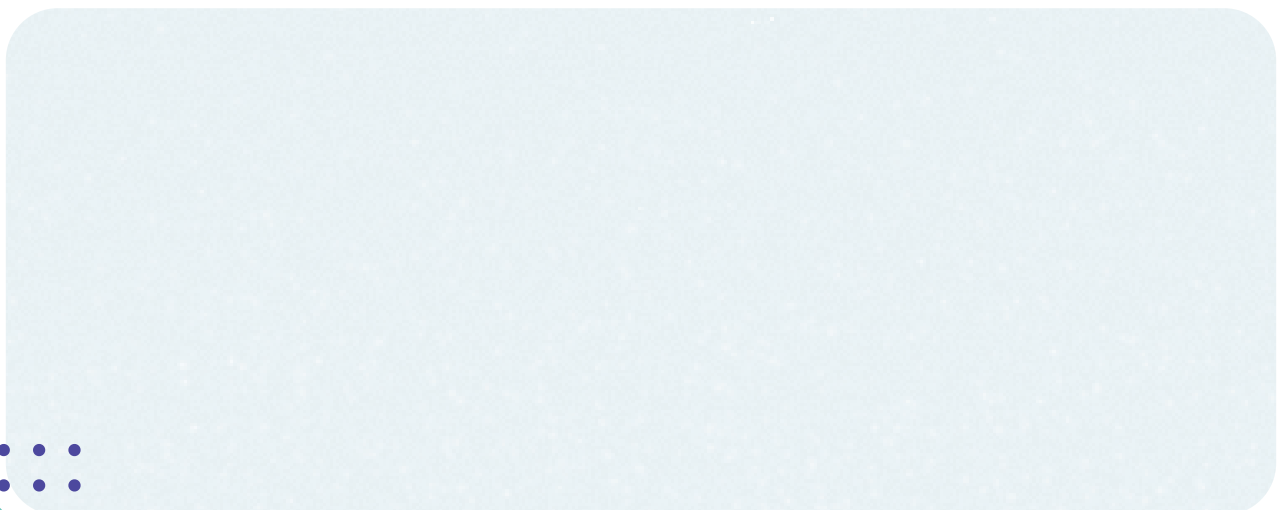
Help one person feel welcome. Simple actions matter.

Try one of the following:

- Say hello.
- Move closer.
- Invite conversation.
- Introduce them to someone else.

Reflection

How did people respond? What worked? What might you do differently next time?



Participant Activities

TO INSPIRE MOVEMENT CONNECTION

6 Notice Who Is There

Think about how movement changes when it is shared.
During a class, game, walk, or activity, notice:

- eye contact
- smiles
- laughter
- encouragement
- shared experiences
- moving together

Reflection

When did you feel most connected?

What helped create that feeling?



Participant Activities

TO INSPIRE MOVEMENT CONNECTION

7

Build Your Connection Circle

Think about people who make movement more enjoyable.

Name three or more people who help me feel seen and connected:

Reflection

What qualities help you feel welcomed, valued, and included?

How can you offer those same qualities to others?





Participant Tips

FOR MOVEMENT CONNECTION

Tip #1: Connection Begins with Small Actions

A smile, nod, wave, or hello can completely change someone's experience.

Tip #2: Let Yourself Be Seen

Others cannot always know you are open to connection unless you show them.

Tip #3: Be Curious

Ask questions.

Learn names.

Show interest in others.

Tip #4: Make New Connections at Every Age

Making friends is not just for children.

Connection matters throughout life.

Whether you are 12, 22, 52, or 92, new friendships and relationships can continue to grow.

Tip #5: Move Beyond Your Usual Circle

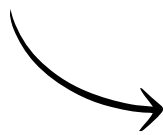
Familiar friends are wonderful.

But challenge yourself to occasionally connect with someone new.



Curious for more?

- [Quick tips for physical activity facilitators](#)
- [Complete the InterActive for Life Inventory](#)



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