



1 SMALL ACT



RESOURCES

# CONNECT WITH OTHERS

## CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE for Better Mental Health

We experience opportunities and challenges every single day. We encounter things we expect to happen, and things we didn't expect to happen. Despite how varying our experiences may seem, we all have something we're going through that may be impacting other aspects of our life both in explicit and implicit ways.

With this in mind, it's important to remember the value of positive and strong social connections. Social connections aren't just ones we have with friends and family – they extend to our professional lives in the form of peers, leaders, and mentors. Feeling a sense of connection with others helps us navigate all kinds of situations. Trusted friends and

advisors may help play a role in deescalating our stress during difficult times. While investing in close relationships with loved ones supports our overall mental health, some studies highlight the additional benefits of looser connections in our social networks and communities.

The Navy defines an inclusive culture as: “a dynamic and deliberately developed environment where everyone feels respected and valued for who they are, trust they can speak up and be fairly treated and share a sense of connectedness.” Inclusivity helps all voices be heard and supports our confidence to speak up.

According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, “connectedness and social capital together may protect against suicidal behaviors by decreasing isolation, encouraging adaptive coping behaviors, and by increasing belongingness, personal value, and worth, to help build resilience in the face of adversity. Connectedness can also provide individuals with better access to formal supports and resources, mobilize communities to meet the needs of its members and provide collective primary prevention activities to the community as a whole.” Connectedness and inclusion go hand-in-hand in creating positive and resilient communities.



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**Consider these ideas for promoting an inclusive culture and sense of connectedness on the individual level:**

## BE INTENTIONAL WITH YOUR SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

You don't have to type up a strict itinerary or conversation guide before investing in a new connection or strengthening an existing one, but it does help to go in prepared and mindful in order to foster empathy. Setting an intention doesn't guarantee impact, but it may help you feel more grounded and confident in your response. Consider the following questions: is the conversation one-sided? Are you actively listening to their responses? Are you showing empathy? How do you think the person is feeling?

## VOLUNTEER TO COACH OR MENTOR SOMEONE

Offer to lend your knowledge and expertise to someone looking for growth opportunities. Even if a skill doesn't immediately come to mind, there are small ways you can support others. If a peer seems to have trouble using a certain software, ask them if you can help troubleshoot it. Reviewing a friend's resume or helping a family member brainstorm a few ideas for how to approach a challenging conversation can go a long way. You have the power to help others feel recognized and respected. 1 Small ACT is all that may be needed to help someone feel more comfortable.

## SHARE RESOURCES

Working together helps build strong communities. Whether you find tips on social media or read something helpful from an online toolkit, think of who else in your network may benefit from the concept. Ask others what information they've found useful. Nudge friends, family members and peers to access resources that can help improve their well-being.

Checking in on friends, family members and loved ones to ensure open communication and awareness of opportunities to help others in your network promotes a supportive and inclusive culture, and helps you feel more connected and present as well.

## WHERE TO GET HELP:

- Your local Navy chaplain, Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) or medical
- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:**
  - Call: 988, press 1
  - Text: 838255
- **Chat online:** <https://988lifeline.org/chat/>
- Military OneSource: call (800) 342 9647 or visit [www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil)
- Sailor Assistance and Intercept for Life (SAIL)
- Crisis Text Line: text 741741

**For access to more resources:**



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