



COMMON POINTS Connecting.

Duration	10-15 minutes
Material	Pen and paper
General workshop objectives	Challenge certain preconceived notions; Practise being non-judgemental; Put relationships into perspective.

Explanation to teachers

Practising mindfulness is a way to cultivate positive thinking, become aware of the beauty that surrounds you, and take care of yourself and others—all of which fosters an environment of goodness, kindness and compassion. This state of mindfulness necessarily depends on having a relationship with yourself and with others.

Incorporating mindfulness into the students' everyday life can be compared to planting seeds in their minds and then letting them quietly germinate, over time and with care, rather than trying to give them a "crash course." Each student will master mindfulness at their own pace. Each student will learn to connect with the present moment, to themselves and to others, in their own way.

The common points exercise will give the students an opportunity to take a fresh look at relationships and stop basing their perceptions on differences. They will be asked to point out the things they have in common and the things they recognize in each other. This is a starting point for learning how to connect with each other. Remind the students that it's normal to judge people and look for differences, but when they consciously try to do the opposite, their outlook on the world is likely to change, and they will find it easier to build and maintain quality relationships (Leary *et al.*, 2008).

Why connect with others?

- To feel less isolated;
- To be healthy;
- To live a longer, better life.

(Leary *et al.*, 2008; Cundiff and Matthews, 2018)

Good to know...

In addition to providing insight into identity and the environment, connecting also implies maintaining quality relationships with others. In fact, research shows that people with healthy relationships who surround themselves with good friends with whom they share quality time are healthier and live longer, happier lives. A healthy and active social life in childhood is associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and obesity in adulthood.

(Cundiff and Matthews, 2018)

Tip for facilitators

Do the exercise at the same time as the students. It's great to lead by example... and you'll benefit, too.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Ask the students to close their eyes or to write.
2. Suggest that they take a moment to think about someone who seems completely different from them, someone they're going through a rough time with, or someone they don't particularly like. Specify that they should not say the person's name out loud or write it on the paper.
3. Ask them to take a moment to notice how they feel. Ask them to focus their attention on their physical sensations or emotions right then and there.
4. Then, ask the students to make a list, in their head or on paper, of all the things they think they have in common with the person they've chosen. Suggest some simple things like number of siblings, the school they attend, the sport they play, or a similar situation they're going through (a break-up, for example). Give them enough time to review their common points.
5. Suggest they try to see the person as someone with the same interests or experiences, instead of someone who is drastically different from them. Remind them that the way they connect with a person is not set in stone and that perceptions can change as they grow and learn to connect with themselves and others. Remind them that the goal isn't to suddenly like everyone. It's normal to have more rocky relationships with some people. It's simply a matter of taking a step back in order to understand the other person better.
6. Finally, wrap up the activity with the following questions:
 - After making your list of common points, did you see the person any differently? Did they seem more familiar?
 - What makes you consider someone a friend?
 - Can people you like also sometimes get on your nerves? Why do you still like them?

DIGGING DEEPER

Show the students the following two videos:

- [Les choses qui nous rassemblent](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=359817234631416) (https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=359817234631416)
- [L'humanité surgit d'un regard](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_YW3hmljzGE) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_YW3hmljzGE)