

## UNIT 3

# Get Connected

Starting college today is likely to change your social world and access to support in significant ways.

### Some of these changes are exciting:

You get to meet new people and be a part of new groups. You may discover new interests and expand your community.



### Some of these changes are challenging:

You may be living away from home for the first time, feeling lonely, or overwhelmed. Or, you may be taking classes remotely, feeling uncertain about how to connect.

Adapting to these new social realities is critical in helping you learn, cope with challenges, and stay well. Anti-racism and social transformations also may be intersecting with your community, creating profound shifts in how you see yourself and move through life.

**This toolkit will guide you in reflecting on your social world and taking steps to sustain or expand your connections with others.**

# Make a Map

To start, let's map the rings of support in your life using concentric circles.



Using the template on the following page, put yourself in the center circle first. Then, think of people you rely on for support.

Map the people who are closest to you in the first circle. These can be people you interact with on a daily basis or with whom you feel a sense of closeness, even if you don't see or talk with them everyday.



In the next circle, map the people with whom you feel a connection but who may not be a part of your daily life. Or, people you don't know well but would like to get to know better.

In the outermost circle, consider people you appreciate or rely on but see less frequently.



As you fill in your circles, know that your map may be very different than it was a few months or even weeks ago. Your map also may be very different from the maps of others around you. **That is OK.** Know that the number of people you have listed on your map is not what matters most. Think quality over quantity.

**What matters is that your circles support you!**



Reflect on your map as a snapshot in time. Then, read over the descriptions of the “Get Connected” tools that follow.

**Select 1-2 actions that are of greatest interest to you, and practice them this week.**

**After you practice, complete the Reflections page.**



#### TOOL 1

### Keep Up Your Connections

There are many ways to keep up your connections with people in your circles now, even in the midst of great change and challenge.

**Reflect on:** How have you noticed your relationships changing as you get settled into college? How have you noticed your relationships changing due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the movement for racial justice?



Consider the following suggestions and make **an** to do **at least one** this week:

#### Reach out

A phone call, text, or email go a long way. Let someone in your circle know you are thinking of them, or share part of your day.

#### Express gratitude

The simple act of thanking someone not only makes that person feel better, it also can make you feel better too! Think of something someone has done for you lately and let them know you appreciate them.

#### Have fun

Get together virtually with your friends online to share a hobby, play musical instruments, watch viral dance videos, sketch together, play virtual board games, try card tricks, knit, and more! It can take time to make new connections. It's often helpful to rely on friends you had before college during this transition.

#### Schedule a time to connect

Ask someone in your circle to schedule a time to connect. This could be a one-time connection or something you plan for each week.

#### Learn together

Learning together with another person is a great way to connect.

#### Here are some ideas.

Ask someone to join you in exploring a creative project or idea.

Use digital tools to collaboratively write or create across distances.

Ask someone to talk about what you are learning in this class, read the same book, or watch a movie online together.

Share on social media what you are learning about the COVID-19 pandemic and the movement for racial justice.



## TOOL 2

## Build New Connections

Your map may get you thinking about the need to make some new connections.

**Reflect on:** Are you experiencing challenges and are unsure of who can help? Are you interested in doing new and fun things but unsure with whom to do them safely? Do your support circles include people who may have different worldviews and life experiences than yours? Would you like to expand your circles in these ways?



Consider the following suggestions and make a plan to do **at least one** this week.



### Explore Campus

Get to know the resources available to you by reviewing the Campus Connections summary in Canvas. Identify one person or group who can help support you, and identify one way you can contribute to or volunteer on campus or locally.

### Attend Office Hours

Come to office hours to connect, even if you don't have burning questions about the class. Your instructors care about you and your learning! Let them get to know you a little better. Ask them what motivates them in their work.



## Ask a Classmate

Ask a classmate a question about an assignment or a lecture, or ask what led them to take the class. Consider inviting them to join you in a socially distant outdoor study session, or one over Zoom.



## Surprise Someone With a Small Act of Kindness

A care package of small items found on a nature walk, a note on the door, or a brief text to a new friend. Small acts can mean a lot. Remember you are not alone. All first year students are in the same boat of needing to build new connections.

## Identify Shared Interests

(Use this list as a guide when meeting people to see if you can identify shared interests.)

Connecting with people is easier with shared interests.

### Think of the 5 "Ps" of connection:

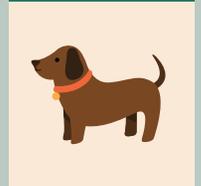
**People** (role models, public figures you admire, etc.)

**Places** (where you grew up, travel, places you feel most at home, etc.)

**Passions** (hobbies, sports, music, etc.)

**Pets** (favorite animals, puppy instagrams, etc.)

**Plants** (yes, succulents!)



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



Did you connect with any friends or family who were part of your life before college, or did you reach out to any new people? How did it go?



It's common to feel nervous or shy about reaching out. If you felt nervous, and you reached out even so, what did you learn from that experience?



Looking ahead to the next few weeks, how would you like to expand or strengthen your circles of support?

