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Building Belonging and Connection After Disruptions

This video-based lesson helps students explore empathy, inclusion, and community connection to support youth well-being after emergencies and disruptive events. Students learn to recognize the emotional impact of crises, understand ways to foster safe and inclusive spaces, practice supportive communication, and develop skills to help peers and communities recover while maintaining their own well-being.

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Before You Teach

Before you teach, we strongly recommend you review our supporting resources:

Educator Workbook

Mental Health 101

Safer Language

Classroom Discussion Guide

Trauma Informed Teaching

This lesson is best used alongside additional learning about mental health, including warning signs, coping strategies, and help-seeking supports.

Lesson Summary

This lesson begins by helping students notice how emergencies and disruptive events can affect young people's emotions, relationships, and daily routines. Students explore common social and emotional reactions, such as worry, fear, withdrawal, or difficulty connecting with others, and reflect on the importance of empathy and inclusive practices in supporting peers and communities. Video speakers help normalize these responses and provide a safe space for students to think about their own well-being.

The lesson emphasizes trauma-informed principles by giving students choice, normalizing diverse reactions, and fostering reflection without requiring personal disclosure. Students leave the lesson with concrete strategies to notice and respond to emotional needs, build safe and inclusive connections, and support peers and communities while caring for themselves.

Learning Goals

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Explain how emergencies and disruptions can affect connection, belonging, and relationships in general.
2. Identify strategies that help individuals and communities rebuild connection and reduce isolation.
3. Recognize the role of empathy, inclusion, and peer support in recovery.
4. Apply at least one idea for strengthening belonging in a school or community setting.

Note: Students are not expected to share personal experiences to meet these goals.

Materials

Slide Deck

 Building Belonging and Connection After Emergencies

Video (also linked in slide deck)

Together in Change: Building Belonging and Connection After Emergencies

Handouts

-  Video Guide: Building Belonging and Connection After Emergencies

Additional Materials

-  ANSWER KEY Video Guide: Building Belonging and Connection After Emergencies
- Teacher computer, projector, and speakers
- Paper, markers/pencils
- List of school/community support resources (e.g., counselor, trusted adult, youth helplines)

Lesson Overview

- Minds On (5 –10 minutes)
 - Action Tasks (55 – 65 minutes)
 - Consolidation (3-5 minutes)
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Lesson Procedure

Note: All parts of the lesson procedure can be found in the slide deck provided.

Land Acknowledgement (Slide 2)

In the slide deck, we have included Jack.org’s land acknowledgement. We encourage you to write your own, acknowledging the Nations, communities, territories and treaties upon which you live and work, and your calls to action for reconciliation / Self Pledge.

Here are some resources to support you:

- [Why Acknowledge?](#)
- [Territory Acknowledgement - Native-Land.ca.](#)

Part 1: Minds-On (5–10 minutes)

Slides 3-5: Opening & Emotional Safety Setup (2-3 minutes)

Review **Objectives** and **Ensuring a Positive Experience**.

Teacher Prompt: “Today we’ll be learning about building belonging and connection after emergencies or other disruptions. Everyone responds differently, and it’s okay to step back, take a break, or ask for support at any time.”

A. Optional: Quick Grounded Check-In (1 minute)

This is a suggested activity if you notice your students are activated or dysregulated. It can be used at any point in the lesson.

Prompt:

“Right now, scan your body. Are you feeling more alert, calm, tired, or restless? How do you know? What sensations do you notice are telling you this?” (No sharing required.)

Students respond by:

- Circling a word
- Holding up fingers
- Writing privately

After your students respond, invite them to take a few deep breaths. You can use the Kids Help Phone Breathing Balloon (**slide 7**) to help guide breathing, if needed.

B. Quickwrite or Discuss (1-2 minutes)**Option A:**

“Feeling disconnected or left out can look or feel like...”

Option B:

“Feeling connected or like you belong can look or feel like...”

Students may choose to respond to **one or both** prompts and silently brainstorm words or phrases. They can:

- Write privately
- Add ideas anonymously (sticky notes or shared board)
- Think quietly

Debrief (2–3 minutes)

- Highlight that both connection and disconnection affect thoughts, emotions, body, and behaviour
- Emphasize that some may have similar experiences and equally each person’s experience is unique and shaped by their individual context
- Reinforce that connection can support well-being, especially during stressful or changing times

C. Gentle content notice and **clear lesson roadmap** before the video:

“Sometimes people go through events that are stressful, disruptive, or unexpected. Everyone responds in their own way. Some people may feel more affected than others, and that’s natural.

Today’s video focuses on how young people and communities build connection, empathy, and belonging during and after difficult or disruptive times. During the video, you might notice different thoughts or feelings come up. That’s okay. You can take a break, look away, or pause your note-taking at any time.

After the video, you’ll be invited to do some discussion and activities to practice what we’ve learned. You will not be asked or expected to share personal experiences. You can choose how you participate: listening, writing, drawing, or taking a quiet break if needed.”

Offer grounding reminder

“If you notice your body or mind getting tense or any uncomfortable feelings while watching, you can try a few slow breaths, stretch, or gently refocus your attention. This is about learning strategies and seeing examples, not about reliving personal or shared experiences.”

Part 2: Action Tasks (55-65 minutes)

Slide 6: Video (43:48)

Together in Change Video: Building Belonging and Connection After Emergencies

Share the **Video Guide** with your students, and briefly review the instructions. Emphasize that the questions are meant to help them notice key ideas, and it’s okay if they don’t catch every answer. Students can use the space on the side for additional notes or thoughts, if they choose.

Supportive Options During Viewing:

- Students may look down, doodle, or take notes.
- Provide a quiet signal students can use if they need a short break.

Activity: Post-Viewing Regulation Pause (1-2 minutes)

Slides 7-8

Teacher prompt: “There was a lot of information in that video. Before we talk, let’s take a moment to pause. You don’t need to share anything. Let’s just take a breath and reset.”

Share the videos on the slides, and invite your students to try the activities, if they are comfortable doing so.

- [Breathing Balloon](#) (Kids Help Phone)
-  Coping Skill: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Grounding Technique (1:51)

Processing & Reflection (15–20 minutes)

1. Review & Pair/Group Share (8–10 minutes)

Slide 9

- Give your students time to review their **Video Guide** responses and add to anything they may have missed.
- Then, have students pair up or form small groups (2–4 students) to share and discuss what they noticed during the video.

Discussion Prompts:

- What did you add or notice after reviewing your notes?
- What strategies from the video help build connection and reduce isolation?
- What roles can peers or schools play in supporting belonging?

Optional: Group identifies **2–3 key takeaways** to share with the class

Teacher Reminder: “Keep responses general and based on the video. There is no need to share personal experiences, unless you would like to. Listening is also participating.”

2. Whole Class Debrief (5–7 minutes)

Slide 10

Prompts:

- What challenges do young people face in staying connected during difficult times?
- What strategies or actions help build connection, belonging, and support?
- How can students, peers, and schools contribute to a stronger, caring community?

Suggestion: Capture responses on the board or a shared class document.

4. Closing Reframe (1–2 minutes)

Teacher script:

“Today we talked about how connection and belonging can make a real difference during difficult or disruptive times. One important takeaway is that no one has to go through challenges alone. Connection can help us feel safer, more grounded, and more supported.

At the same time, everyone’s needs are different. Some people may want to connect right away, and others may need space. Both are okay. What matters is being aware, showing care, and offering connection in ways that feel respectful.

Small actions can have a big impact. Noticing someone, including them, or checking in can help reduce isolation and strengthen a sense of belonging. And support can come from many places, including peers, trusted adults, and community.

As you leave today, remember: connection doesn’t have to be big to matter. Small, everyday actions can help people feel less alone.”

Part 3: Consolidation (3-5 minutes)

Teacher Prompt: “Now that we’ve talked about belonging and connection and thought about some strategies, let’s take a moment to reflect individually.”

Individual Reflection / Exit Option

Students choose **one** prompt:

- *“One idea from today that feels helpful or hopeful is...”*
- *“One way people can support belonging is...”*
- *“One action that helps people feel less alone is...”*
- *“One strategy I want to remember is...”*

Options:

- Anonymous submission
- Drawing instead of writing
- Private digital response

Remind students (and yourself) of:

- School supports (counsellor, child and youth worker, trusted adults).
- Crisis or community supports as appropriate.