

Creating a Sense of Belonging



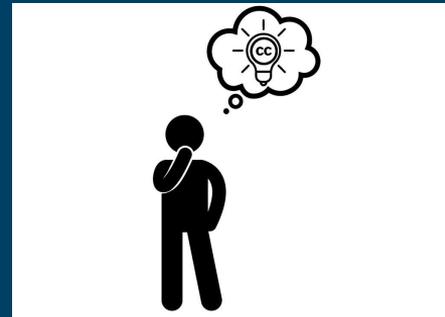
JaneAnn Benson

Why Belonging Matters

Think of a time when you did not experience a sense of belonging.

What words describe how you felt?

What did you want to do?



What is YOUR STORY?



How has your story developed?
How does it impact your journey on belonging?
Reflection is a key to this work.

— Creating a sense of belonging is essential in Early Childhood programs.

Continue to think about your own classrooms, programs and communities that you lead.

How are you currently supporting the idea of a belonging?



Research can inform and guide our practice

Positive Relationships

We know that environments that promote positive relationships, that are consistent and predictable for children, that promote a sense of belonging are environments in which children are more likely to thrive, are more likely to develop the social-emotional competencies they need, and more likely, ultimately, to learn and be ready to go to school. – Dr. Mary Louise Hemmeter

Lower Commitment

“Social belonging is a fundamental human need, hardwired into our DNA. And yet, 40% of people say that they feel isolated at work, and the result has been lower organizational commitment and engagement.”

The Value of Belonging at Work, Harvard Business Review (2019)

Reflection and Vulnerability



“

Language shows us that naming an experience doesn't give the experience more power, it gives us the power of understanding and meaning.

Brené Brown
ATLAS OF THE HEART



Belonging Matters



Families



Teachers



Children



Community

What are characteristics of a caring community?



See



Hear



Feel



What Else?

Families

Think about what you currently do to create a sense of belonging with families specifically?



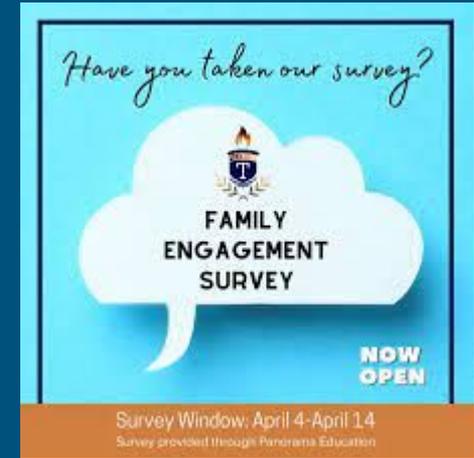
Families

Any guesses what families have shared?



- Starts from first contact
- Ask for input
- Use the input
- Multiple avenues to stay engaged
- Inclusive Language
- Supportive of families/caregivers - what we call grandparents
- Family pictures
- Help - Volunteer
- Meet & Greet

Belonging Ideas





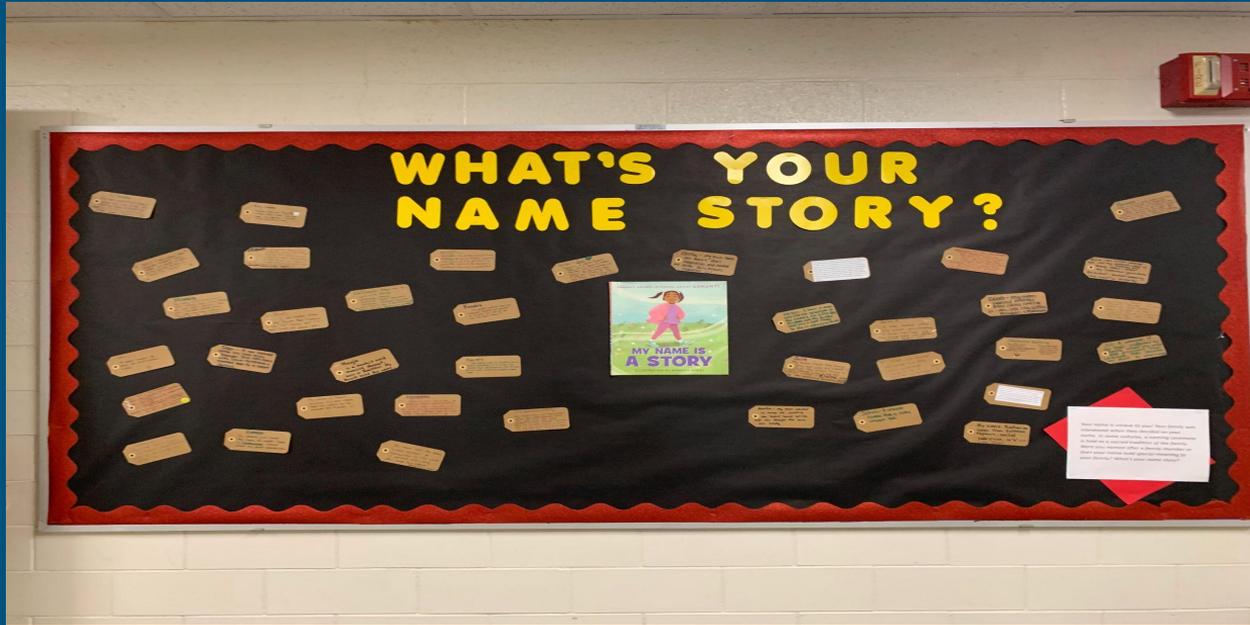
Belonging Ideas

Infant Classroom Documentation Connect to Maori Culture



Belonging Ideas

What's Your Name Story?



Belonging Ideas

Think about what you currently do to create a sense of belonging with teachers specifically?

Teachers



Teachers

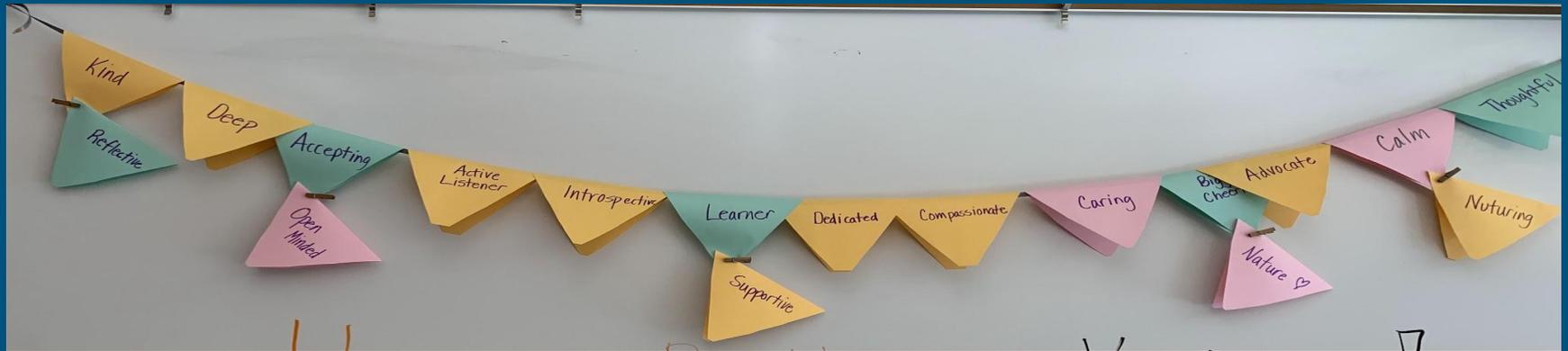
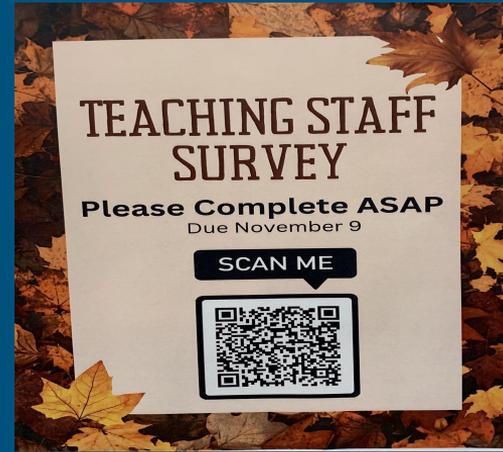
"When quality teachers have a sense of belonging and share the vision of a school, they are much more likely to stay, even in difficult to staff schools."

- Kevin L. O'Gorman & Jacqueline E. Jacobs
in *Education Week Teacher*

- Excellent onboarding
- Meet/Celebrate
- Genuine feedback
- Enneagram
- Team building
- Family pictures
- Belonging Statement
- Input on decisions



Belonging Ideas

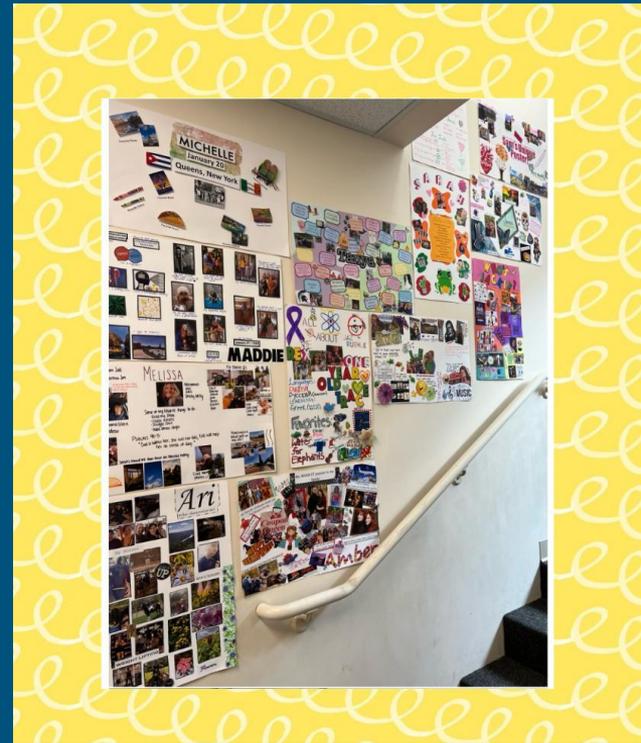


Belonging Ideas

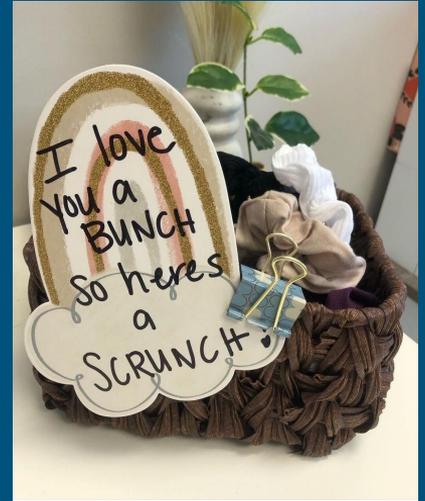
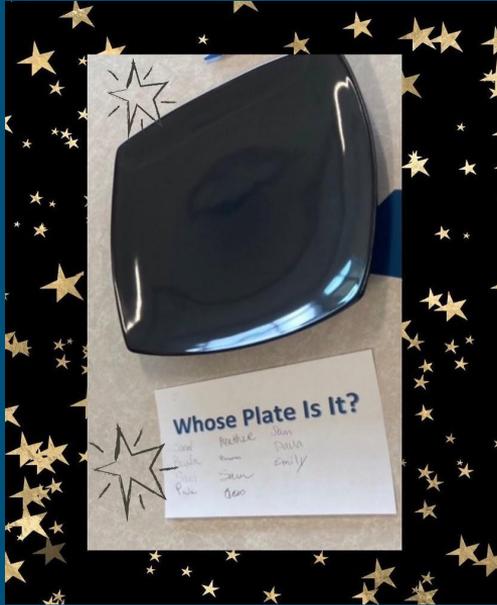
YOU BELONG HERE

We are a respectful learning community that seeks to listen, understand and support everyone.
We empower each other to acknowledge differences and increase awareness of our personal biases.
We are in this together – working for a world where everyone is protected and honored, exactly as they are.

GRCC
Early Childhood Learning Laboratory



Belonging Ideas



Things
I hate
that
everyone
else
loves...

Belonging Ideas

Children

Think about what you currently do to create a sense of belonging with children specifically?



Children

Belonging for young children is being in a place where they feel confident enough to play without having to look over their shoulders seeking approval, or dodging disapproval, to explore without fear, to redefine their space and to use materials found around them to create for themselves a sense of order, pattern and structure.

-Bev Bos

- ❖ Materials that mirror community
- ❖ Prioritize connection
- ❖ Respectful of their families
- ❖ Home Visits
- ❖ Pictures of families
- ❖ Welcome every day



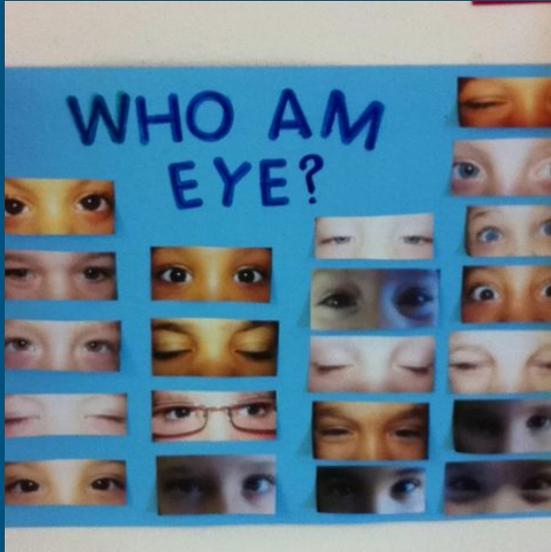
Belonging Ideas



- ❖ All About Me
- ❖ Helpers
- ❖ Transportation/Housing

Belonging Ideas





Small group name
Extended Families

Belonging Ideas



❖ When children are gone how do you keep in touch or welcome them back?





Belonging Ideas



Books are always a great place to START!

WHEN KIDS **SEE**
THEMSELVES IN
BOOKS,
IT SENDS A **POSITIVE**
MESSAGE
THAT THEY BELONG
AND MATTER.



BlackBabyBooks.com

@BLACKBABYBOOKS

Belonging Ideas

Books About Belonging

Maybe Something Beautiful by Isabel Campoy

The Everybody Club by Nancy Loewen

Otis by Loren Long

Elmore by Holly Hobbie

If There Was Never a You by Amanda Rowe

Room For Bear Ciara Gavin

Boo Who by Ben Clanton

Neon Leon by Jane Clarke

It's Okay To Be Different by Todd Parr

Geraldine by Elizabeth Lilly

Swing by Michael Hall

All People Are Beautiful by Vincent Kelly

Why Me, Mama? by Katherine Lockwood

The Belonging Tree by MaryAnn Cocca-Leffler

Strictly No Elephants by Lisa Mantchev

Giraffes Can't Dance by Giles Andreae

What Matters Most by Emma Dodd

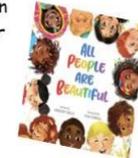
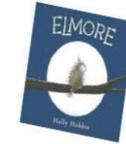
The Day You Begin by Jacqueline Woodson

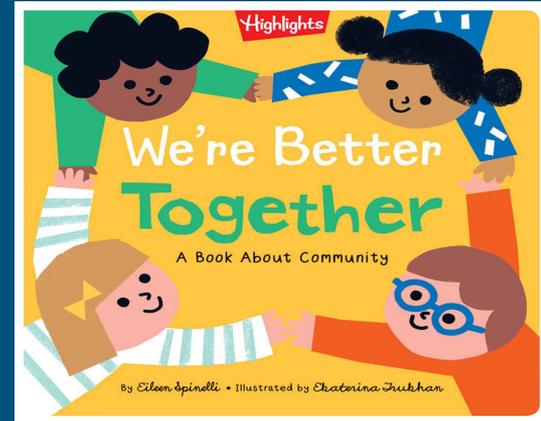
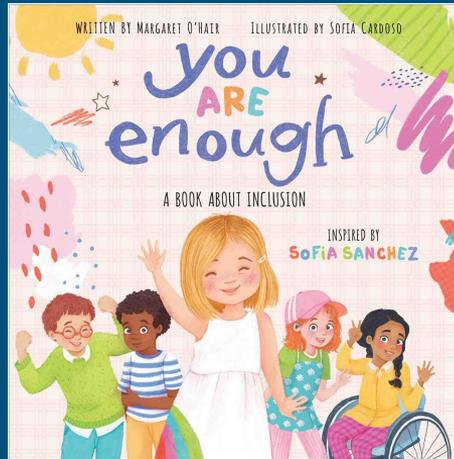
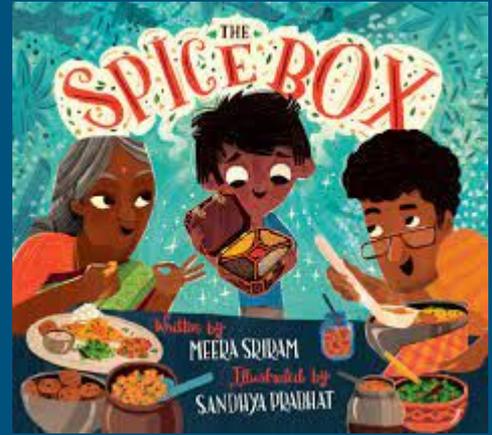
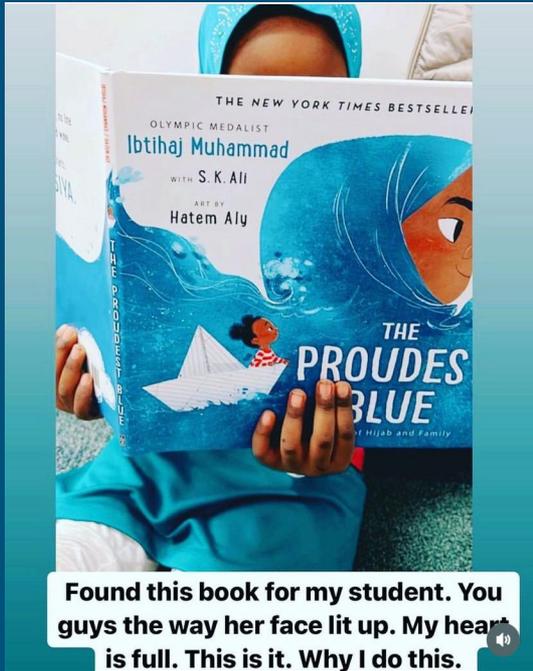
Hooway For Rodney Rat by Helen Lester

Big Al by Andrew Clements

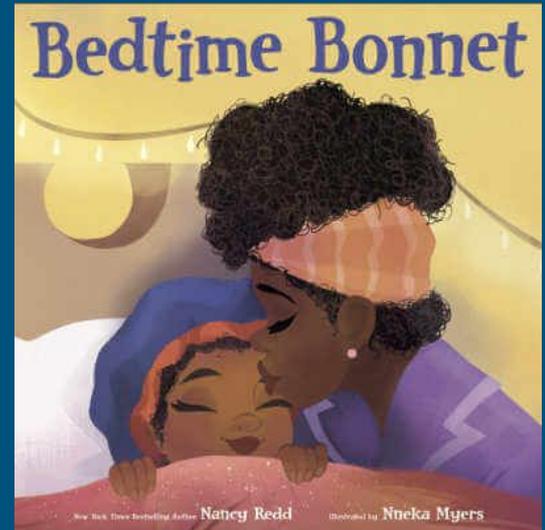
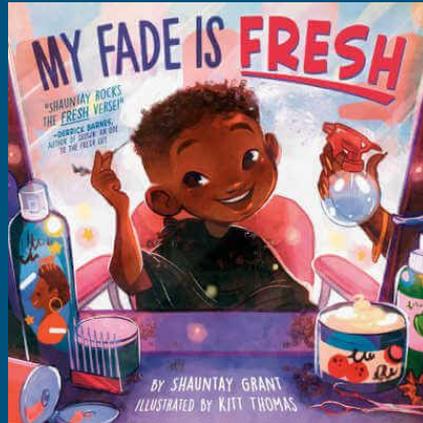
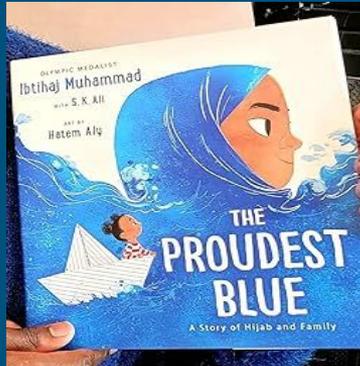
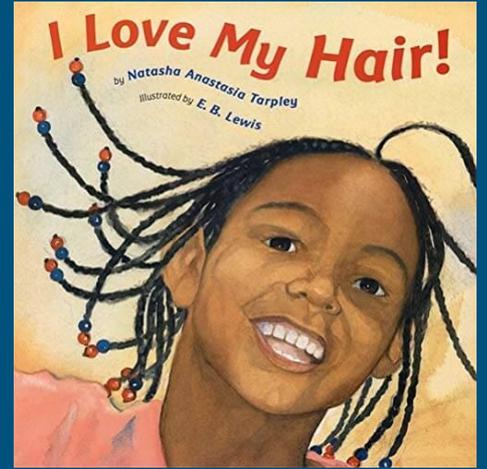
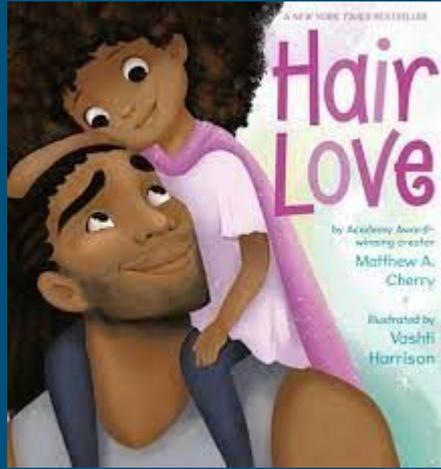
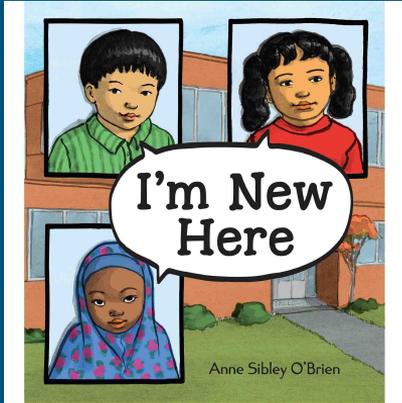
Everyone Belongs by Heather Avis

The Gruffalo by Julia Donaldson





Belonging Books



Belonging Books



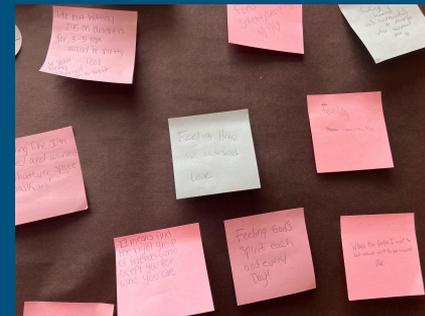
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BELONGING

is when I walk into a room
and I don't need armour.

— Shannon Cohen —
Founder of the Rockstar Women's Movement

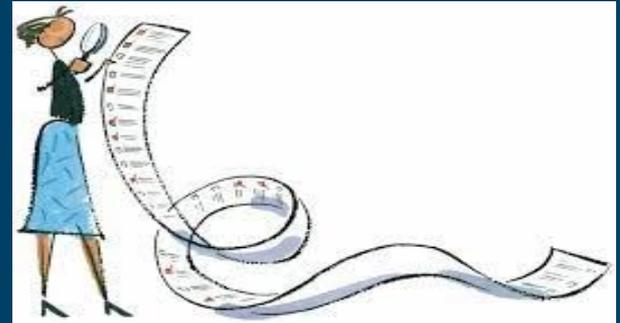
 @tobelonging
tobelonging.com



Belonging Books

Community

Think about what you currently do to create a sense of belonging with community specifically?



Community

“Diversity is having a seat at the table. Inclusion is having a voice. And belonging is having that voice be heard.”

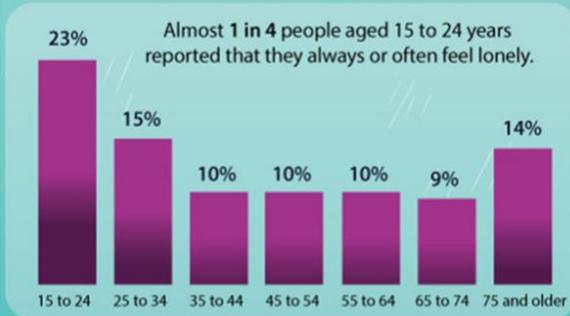
- Liz Fosslien, Author

Three in 10 Millennials say they always or often feel lonely

How often, if ever, do you feel lonely? (% who say they "always" or "often" feel lonely)



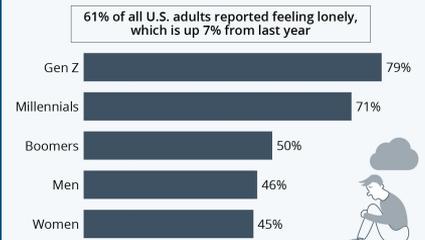
Loneliness has no age restriction



Infographic from Statistics Canada

Gen Z Is Lonely

Percent of U.S. adults who are lonely, shown as demographics



n=10,441 adults
Survey was conducted during the summer of 2019
Source: Ipsos Polling for Cigna U.S. Loneliness Index



statista

Loneliness Epidemic

*Diversity is a **fact** (the numbers are what they are), inclusion is a **choice** (you decide whether to include someone or not), but belonging is a **feeling** that can be enforced by a culture that you can purposefully create.'*



BELONGING IS A FEELING

What are the barriers?

We need to navigate barriers that get in our way to creating spaces that embrace belonging. How does your program do this?

We need to talk about it more - normalize that this is a continuum. Where are you on the continuum? Do you have goals to increase belonging?

Where can you strengthen the sense of belonging?

- ❑ Be observant/reflective
 - ❑ Ask questions
- ❑ Offer solutions/suggestions
 - ❑ Be informed
 - ❑ Belonging needs to be practiced over and over again.

Resources



Stay in touch:

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