



As we approach the end of Career Life Connections, this last lesson will focus on the importance of community connectedness post-graduation. Until this point, you have likely been a member of several communities. This could include the community where you live, your learning community, or perhaps the community where you work or volunteer. Hopefully you have come to realize the many benefits that being a member of a community brings, especially when it comes to broadening your career-life awareness and options.

After you graduate, you will experience many adjustments as you continue on to travel, work, attend post-secondary school, or move to new community. Becoming engaged in a new community can be difficult - it takes courage to go somewhere unfamiliar and meet new people, but recognizing the many benefits will hopefully encourage you to do so!

### ***Why is community connectedness important?***

You may have experienced, or come to experience that feeling of a broken heart or homesickness, which is essentially the feeling of missing a connection with somewhere or somebody. It's an awful feeling, one that is hard to shake, but putting yourself out there to be more socially connected in your community can help! When you are socially connected, you are able to give back, reach out to others, and support each other. You may find that mutual support really helpful as you move on to new challenges! As you become more socially connected by making new connections or through hobbies, you will have more people to talk to and depend on, which can help reduce the risk of mental illness.

### ***What if my plans include going away to college or university?***

If your plans include attending college or university in a new community, you should pay special attention to the importance of community connectedness. Quite often, students will feel homesick, missing their family, friends, and pets, as well as their old routines and structures. They will spend a lot of energy trying to make sense of the new environment, feeling confused and bewildered from time to time. Although this may cause some students to become more isolated, it couldn't be more important to become

active in your community. Join a club, study group, or volunteer. Community participation while at college or university sets the stage for a lifetime of leaning in, learning, reaching out and building connections that will bridge barriers between different groups of people in your life.

### ***What if I plan on staying close to home?***

Even if your plans include staying in your current community, you will find that changes in the next year may leave you with less connections through school, work or your hobbies. Become an active citizen by reaching out, joining a club, starting or joining committee at work, spending time on a hobby. It won't take too long to re-establish connections, establish networking opportunities and become an engaged member of your community.

### ***Traveling after high school?***

Think about how you could connect with the communities you visit. Many local organizations such as Rotary and Toastmasters would welcome you to participate while you are there, giving you the opportunity to interact with the locals. Find a local volunteer organization with a cause you can get behind and offer your services, even just for an afternoon. Visit the local library, recreation centre or park to engage with the community and learn about their culture. The benefits of social connections are mutual - others will be as impacted by you as you will be by them!

Whatever your plans, there are endless opportunities to engage in rich connections with others.