

Well-Being Tip

September 2025

The Power of Connection

Person A: “How are you?” [Rushing by, offering a half smile]

Person B: [Continues walking, returns half smile] “Fine, how are you?”

Person A: “I’m good, nice to see you.” [End of interaction]



We’ve all probably had some version of the interaction above, maybe three times already today. Scurrying from meeting to meeting and lecture to lecture can make it feel like we can't afford to carve out time for meaningful social connection with others, but what if we can't afford not to?

Suicide is an urgent public health issue in the U.S., with one in twenty adults having serious thoughts of suicide each year ([National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2025](#)). This Suicide Prevention Month, MSCC is highlighting the power of caring connection to prevent suicide.

The well-being benefits of creating space in our calendars to genuinely connect with others and nurture high quality relationships is well documented. Doing so can improve our ability to manage stress, protect against depression and anxiety, promote balanced eating habits and physical activity, and even improve sleep quality ([Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024](#)). Beyond these benefits, practicing regular, meaningful connection with others in our community promotes a sense of belonging—a well-known protective factor against suicide. When we take the time to check in with classmates, colleagues, and friends on a regular basis, we’re more likely to notice if someone is struggling and support them in getting connected to resources that can help.

So, how can you foster meaningful connections with others and promote a culture of belonging at CCOM?

1. **Creative scheduling.** You’re busy! No doubt. This is where thinking creatively about making time to connect with others comes in. Brainstorm about the ways you can integrate social connection into your daily activities or responsibilities.

- a. Planning to go to the gym? Maybe a friend wants to come with you. Need to grab a quick lunch between lectures? Your classmates probably do too, go together. Planning to go grocery shopping on Sunday? It might be more fun with a friend.
2. **Start a conversation.** Ask someone how they are doing and show them that you have the space to listen to the real, long answer. You can indicate your willingness to listen by putting your cell phone down, closing your laptop, or simply turning to face someone while they speak.
3. **Practice active listening.** See if you can understand what the speaker is trying to say, rather than hearing what you want to hear or expect to hear. You might try paraphrasing what you heard, repeating it back to them, and asking open-ended questions.
 - a. For example, Person A: "...I just don't know where to begin, so many things have gone wrong at work and home this week."
Person B: "Between the car breaking down and that big project deadline coming up, you are juggling a lot right now. What else is going on?"
4. **Validate the speaker's emotions.** Practice non-judgment and communicate to your loved one that their feelings make sense in the situation.
 - a. For example, "It is totally understandable that you would feel stressed about your car and this demanding project."
5. **Offer words of encouragement or practical support.** The kind of encouragement or practical support offered will vary based on the kind of relationship you have with the speaker, but it is generally helpful to communicate that no one has to face life's challenges alone.
 - a. For example, "I'm here for you as your friend, and we can work through this tough season together."
 - b. You could also consider offering practical support.
 - i. For example, "How about I give you a ride to work on Thursday and Friday? Your place is right on the way to my office, and it's not a bother."
6. **Check back in.** Follow up later, asking specific questions about whatever detail they shared with you. Remembering the details about our friends' lives and taking time to ask about them later helps people to feel seen and cared for, building stronger bonds over time.
 - a. For example, "Good to see you! How did the repairs go with the car mechanic this weekend?"

Creating a community of belonging and care for everyone at Carver College of Medicine starts with small, daily moments of connection. Strengthening the fabric of our community promotes well-being and serves as an important suicide prevention strategy. How might you make a little time to connect with others today?

The National Alliance on Mental Illness provides more detailed guidance for conversations with friends or loved ones who you suspect are struggling or having thoughts about suicide. For more information: <https://www.nami.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/NAMI-What-to-Do-When-Someone-Shares-They-Are-Struggling.pdf>

Support Spaces

Join clinicians from the Office of Education Support and the Medical Student Counseling Center for support spaces, a support group open to all CCOM students.

- September 22 from 5:00-6:00 pm in Kelch Conference Room
- October 8 from 12:00-1:00 pm in Kelch Conference Room
- October 27 from 5:00-6:00pm in general hospital room C238
- November 5 from 12:00-1:00 pm in 2126 MERF
- November 17 from 5:00-6:00 pm in Kelch Conference Room
- December 10 from 12:00-1:00 pm in Kelch Conference Room
- December 15 from 5:00-6:00 pm in Kelch Conference Room

Connect with the MSCC

The Medical Student Counseling Center (MSCC) offers free, confidential personal counseling, disability and accessibility services, academic and career development support, and wellness consultations to MD and PA students.

Contact MSCC

Email: osac-mscc@uiowa.edu Phone: 319-335-8056

(Email should not be used to share confidential information or in the event of an emergency.)

If you are in crisis or you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, call or text 9-8-8 or 844-461-5420.

[Nondiscrimination statement Accessibility](#)