



HAVING STRONG SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

This strategy is suggested in the 11-14 BrainWaves lesson:

Building connections and friendships

About the strategy

Adolescence is a time when the social brain and emotion regulation systems are developing and developing social connectedness can help young people manage their emotions better, leading to more positive experiences and greater happiness. Feeling socially supported (by friends, family or other adults) can act as a buffer against stress and reduce feelings of loneliness for young people.

The scientific evidence behind the strategy

1. Quality of friendships

This systematic review of multiple studies found positive associations between friendship quality and happiness, life satisfaction, and overall wellbeing. Adolescents with closer, more supportive friendships tended to report greater happiness and self-esteem. Poor peer relationships were also associated with loneliness in nine relevant studies out of ten.

- Alsarrani, A., et al. (2022). *Association between friendship quality and subjective wellbeing among adolescents: a systematic review*. BMC Public Health 22, 2420.

2. Connectedness with peers and adults predicts wellbeing over time

This longitudinal study found that higher social connectedness in early adolescence predicted higher mental wellbeing later: adolescents who reported feeling connected to peers and adults (e.g., teachers, parents) showed significantly higher wellbeing later and lower levels of negative mental health outcomes.

- Oberle, E., et al. (2024). *Connections matter: Adolescent social connectedness profiles and mental well-being over time*. Journal of Adolescence. Jan-24; 96(1):31-48.

Further reading

This article explores the human need for platonic relationships and the specific ways in which they bolster wellbeing: ["The science of why friendships keep us healthy"](#).