



THE POWER OF WEAK CONNECTIONS

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

Building better connections

About the strategy

The power of 'weak connections' (referred to in the lesson as 'small connections') refers to the idea that casual, low-intensity social ties (such as classmates, acquaintances, or people we see regularly but don't know well) play an important role in reducing loneliness and improving wellbeing.

Unlike close friendships, weak connections do not require deep emotional intimacy. Instead, they provide a sense of belonging, social variety, and everyday social affirmation. Research shows that even brief, friendly interactions can meaningfully improve mood and reduce feelings of isolation. This strategy aims to help young people understand that they do not need lots of close friends to feel connected — small, repeated social interactions matter.

The scientific evidence behind the strategy

Research in social psychology and wellbeing shows that weak social ties: increase daily happiness and life satisfaction; reduce loneliness and social withdrawal, provide emotional benefits comparable to close friendships in day-to-day life; and act as a bridge to stronger relationships over time. This evidence supports the concept of teaching young people that every interaction counts, even when it does not turn into a close friendship.

- Huxhold, O., et al. (2020). *The Strength of Weaker Ties: An Underexplored Resource for Maintaining Emotional Well-Being in Later Life*. *Journals of Gerontology*. 2020 Aug 13;75(7):1433-1442.
- Ascigil, E., et al. (2023). *Minimal Social Interactions and Life Satisfaction: The Role of Greeting, Thanking, and Conversing*. *Social Psychological & Personality Science*, 16(2), 202-213.

Further reading

These articles discuss the power of weak ties:

<https://www.marmaladetrust.org/weakties>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/close-encounters/202312/how-daily-small-talk-can-improve-well-being>