



A Lesson on Belonging, Relationships, and Building a Competitive Advantage Through People Skills



Introduction for the Facilitator

In every learning and career setting, **human connection** is often one of the most underrated drivers of personal and professional success. Whether someone is trying to pass a class, land a job, get promoted, or simply feel like they belong, building meaningful relationships makes everything more possible.

This lesson helps learners recognize that their ability to connect with others is a **personal competitive advantage**. Human connection opens doors, strengthens collaboration, and boosts emotional resilience. It's not about being outgoing; it's about being intentional, consistent, and respectful in how we relate to others.

Students will reflect on the kinds of connections that support their goals, how to build trust across differences, and how to nurture relationships that elevate their life, whether their goals are grand, modest, or laid back. These people skills are professional skills. They are the cheat codes to creating opportunity and support that lasts.

This lesson is designed for adult learners of all ages in college and workforce development settings and includes:

- **A relatable Scenario to introduce the concept**
- **8 Guided Group Discussion Questions with follow-up questions**
- **8 Journal Prompts to reflect on what they're learning**
- **8 personal Skill-Building Strategies**
- **A printable Action Planner for reflection and application**



Scenario: The Solo Student

Andre, 22, is in a two-year HVAC apprenticeship. He shows up early, works hard, and passes all his tests. But he rarely talks to classmates or instructors unless absolutely necessary. When it's time for group work, he avoids eye contact. He tells himself: "I'm not here to make friends, I'm here to work."

One day, his instructor shares about an opportunity for paid fieldwork with a local company. But the spot goes to someone else—someone with fewer technical skills, but stronger relationships.

Andre wonders, "Was I invisible? Or did I miss something more important than I realized?"



Guided Group Discussion Questions

1. **Why do some people view connection or socializing as optional in professional environments?**
Follow-up: How could that view limit their opportunities?
2. **What's the difference between being friendly and building meaningful connections?**
Follow-up: How does trust play into this?
3. **How does human connection impact success in school, training, or work?**
Follow-up: Can you think of a time a connection helped you get something done?
4. **Why do some people feel awkward or unsure about starting conversations or relationships?**
Follow-up: What strategies can make it easier?
5. **How do connection skills relate to your personal competitive advantage?**
Follow-up: What could change in your life if you practiced these skills?
6. **What do connection-building behaviors look like on a job site, in a classroom, or in a workplace?**
Follow-up: Which of these could you start using this week?
7. **What kinds of relationships help support your goals, personally or professionally?**
Follow-up: How are you investing in those relationships?
8. **What's one area of your life where stronger connection would make things better?**
Follow-up: What's one step you could take today to strengthen that connection?



Journal Prompts

1. **Think of a relationship that has helped you move forward in school, work, or life. What made that connection valuable?**
2. **Describe a time you felt unseen or disconnected. What did you need in that moment?**
3. **What does “human connection” mean to you in a classroom, training, or job setting?**
4. **What kind of person do you want to be in a team or group setting?**
5. **What assumptions or habits might be keeping you from building new connections?**
6. **Write down three ways you could build more connections this week.**
7. **Who are the people in your current network that you want to grow closer to?**
8. **What kind of support would you like more of, and how could connection help provide that?**



Skill-Building Strategies

1. **Connection Starter Toolkit:** Prepare 3 questions you can ask anyone: “How did you get into this field?” “What do you like about it?” “What are you working on right now?”
2. **5-Minute Invest Rule:** Spend 5 minutes a day checking in with or encouraging someone you already know.
3. **Network Tracker:** Write down people in your life who support, teach, or challenge you. Add one new name each month.
4. **Listen-Reflect-Respond:** In any conversation, repeat back something the other person said before sharing your own view. Builds trust fast.
5. **Work/Study Wing Partner:** Choose one peer to check in with weekly. Support each other on goals or projects.
6. **3 Compliments, 3 Questions:** Practice giving 3 real compliments this week and asking 3 thoughtful questions.
7. **Relationship Reset Script:** You can use phrases like: “I know we haven’t talked much, but I’d like to learn more about what you do.”
8. **The Connection Challenge:** Intentionally connect with one new person each week for a month: classmate, mentor, coworker, or peer.



2: THE POWER OF HUMAN CONNECTION:

Your Action Plan for Building a Personal Competitive Advantage

Action Planner

Reflect and Prepare

Name: _____

What Is Human Connection?

Human connection is the skill of building relationships that support, inspire, and elevate your learning, work, and life. It's a professional skill that opens doors and creates long-term opportunity.

Why This Matters to Me

In your own words, why does connection matter for your goals, career, or lifestyle?

My Current Relationship Landscape

Where do you want to grow stronger connections right now?

- ☐ Class or training program
- ☐ Jobsite or workplace
- ☐ Mentorship or coaching
- ☐ Peer network
- ☐ Family or personal life
- ☐ Other: _____

Barriers to Connection

What is your biggest obstacle to connecting?

- ☐ Shyness or anxiety
- ☐ Past experiences
- ☐ Time or priorities
- ☐ Cultural or communication differences
- ☐ Not knowing what to say
- ☐ Other: _____

Belief Shift

Circle or write a belief to support your growth:

"Connection builds my personal and professional advantage."

"I don't have to be extroverted to connect with people."

"I can start small and build over time."

"Relationships are investments in my future."

Other: _____



2: THE POWER OF HUMAN CONNECTION: Your Action Plan for Building a Personal Competitive Advantage

Action Planner

Connection Plan + Tracking

Name: _____

My 28-Day Connection Focus

One action I will take consistently to build human connection:

Where will I do it? _____ With whom? _____

How often? ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Other: _____

Restart Plan

When I fall off or feel disconnected, I will:

- ☐ Revisit my "why"
- ☐ Reach out to someone I trust
- ☐ Use a new question or compliment to restart
- ☐ Other: _____

Weekly Reflection Prompts

1. Who did I connect with this week?

2. How did it help my learning, motivation, or mindset?

3. What would I do differently next week to improve my connections?

4. How is this building my personal competitive advantage?

28-Day Connection Tracker

Connection goal: _____

Week 1 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How did week 1 go? Circle one word:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☒ Connected | ☒ Awkward | ☒ Supported |
| ☒ Energized | ☒ Invisible | ☒ Confident |

Week 3 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How did week 3 go? Circle one word:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☒ Connected | ☒ Awkward | ☒ Supported |
| ☒ Energized | ☒ Invisible | ☒ Confident |

Week 2 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How did week 2 go? Circle one word:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☒ Connected | ☒ Awkward | ☒ Supported |
| ☒ Energized | ☒ Invisible | ☒ Confident |

Week 4 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How did week 4 go? Circle one word:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☒ Connected | ☒ Awkward | ☒ Supported |
| ☒ Energized | ☒ Invisible | ☒ Confident |