

**10 Ways to Make
Human Connections
With Today's Catholic Youth**
NCEA Convention
April 2, 2013

Connection is the word of the day. We live in a plugged in and noisy world, full of messages that vie for our attention and the attention of our young people. How can we be heard amidst the racket?

Why do *we* need to connect? Instead of thinking about what we are going to say and how we are going to say it, ask, what is going on in the young person's head? Find out what's there and hook into it. The effort to craft a beautiful message or a great lesson plan is a waste of energy if it does not connect to the listener. Start with what they will give you and build from that.

Why do kids need human connection? 1) for the sake of mental health; kids who have the strongest connections are resilient in the ups and downs of life; 2) when kids bond with the adults in a community, it strengthens their sense of identity, gives them a home, a place of stability and support; 3) adolescence is a vulnerable time; they need someone to turn to for support and guidance; 4) market research tells us that sources of influence are coming closer to home – those who have grown up with electronic media trust those they know; that opens a prime opportunity for the personal influence of a parent, teacher or preacher.

Figure out how to connect – study it, understand it, take that understanding and apply it.

Be attentive to the symptoms of connection:
look at the spaces rather than the objects in that space

Symptoms of Connection	Symptoms of Disconnection
Comfortable	Awkwardness
Freedom/safety to be oneself	Tension and fear
Naturally flowing conversation	Self-protectiveness, avoidance of conflict
Laughter	Feeling small - belittled, mocked or judged
Open body posture	Sleepiness or dullness
Positive eye contact	Negative body language
(Appropriate) physical interaction.	Unwillingness to interact
<i>A sense of lightness, "everything flows"</i>	<i>A sense of heaviness, even dread</i>

To strengthen the bond: locate the sources of connection and disconnection

**Bellinger's
Hierarchy of
Connection**

1. Teach us to see

2. You are Icon

You cannot get out of the way.
You *are* the way.

3. Spend Time just Chillin'

Take the time to be in sync.

4. Create Memories

Memory → Belief → Attitude → Behavior

5. Be Reciprocal /Concrete/Incarnational

Share common interests and common experiences

6. Respect

Respect us and let us respect you.
Deep, abiding, and mutual respect. (Not negotiable.)

7. Be Pastoral

"To connect means I can come to you."
"Help me up when I am down."

8. Motivate

Personally relevant; Moderately risky; Stretches - somewhat inconsistent with prior attitudes; Consistent with our values, goals, *and* needs

9. Capture our Attention

Get our attention: Use surprise; come from an unexpected angle; Hold our attention; create a mystery; tell us something we don't know; has to pass the "who cares?" test

10. Don't be "Boring"

Comprehension - "I don't get what he's talking about;" Repetitiveness- "The same old same old"; Lack of emotional resonance- "I don't "get" anything out of it." "Doesn't speak to my life." Does not "move" me; Experiential consonance- "He doesn't know what I'm going through;" Weak communication skills- lack of a central message, rambling, and poor delivery.

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