



## Social Connection

During life transitions like starting university, a new job, or moving house, our social connections can become challenged. We might lose connections with previous groups, be trying to establish new ones, or just trying to manage our existing connections, whilst handling the demands of university life.

The GROUPS 4 EDUCATION course, designed by Dr Sarah Bentley and colleagues (School of Psychology, UQ), is an evidence-based program focused on the importance of a sense of belonging and connection to others. The latest research tells us that the main contributor to living a long, happy, and healthy life is good group connections<sup>1</sup>. And what is interesting for you as students, is that positive social connection has also been shown to be important for how we think, how we communicate, and how we learn<sup>2</sup>.

The GROUPS 4 EDUCATION programme runs over 5 zoom sessions – one per week, each an hour long. The session is delivered by a facilitator to a small group of 6-8 students. In the sessions, you will do some online activities, and be led through discussions about key issues, such as:

- the importance of connection and belonging
- how to manage your connections
- how to adapt your connections to be more aligned with what is important to you and your university goals.

Groups 4 Education is FREE for first year UQ students, and groups will start in week 3 and later in the semester. Sign up now: [info@sharperminds.university](mailto:info@sharperminds.university)

N.B. If you are enrolled in PSYC1030 or NEUR1020, you can earn up to 6 credits research participation. Sign up via the SONA system <https://uqpsych.sona-systems.com> and look for the Sharper Minds project listings.

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<sup>1</sup> Holt-Lunstad, J, Smith, T.B., \*Baker, M., \*Harris, T., & \*Stephenson, D. (2015). Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors for Mortality: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10 (2), 227-237. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691614568352>

<sup>2</sup> Cruwys, Tegan, Ng, Nikole W. K., Haslam, S. Alexander, and Haslam, Catherine (2020). Identity continuity protects international student academic performance, retention, and life satisfaction: a longitudinal examination of the Social Identity Model of Identity Change. *Applied Psychology* 70 (3) apps.12254 931-954. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12254>