

# Two–Minute Tips

## This Week's Topic: Making Connections

Our entire lives are spent collecting knowledge. All young people, no matter what their age, come to ELO programs with a set of prior experiences, values, and knowledge already in place. We can better learn and retain what we've learned when we understand how the new information or skill relates to what we already know.<sup>1</sup> As adults we can help young people make important connections between their prior knowledge and the activities and new skills we are teaching them in our programs. When young people feel that what they're learning matters, and is relevant to their real lives, they are more engaged in activities—which can help reduce instances of challenging behavior.<sup>2</sup>

## Practice Tips

Here are a few quick tips to help young people make connections to program activities.

### State the Learning Objective

Before the activity, explicitly state the learning objective and link it to their lives. The point of the activity might appear obvious, but don't assume participants are making those connections. Explicitly stating and linking learning objectives to participants' lives also helps strengthen and retain learning.

### Real Life Application

Integrate real life situations, context, and problem-solving into activities. You can ask participants to make these connections, too.

**Example:** Can someone tell me when you might use your knife safety skills from cooking class outside of here?"

### Connect to Common Experiences

Name the connections between activities or new skills with common experiences.

**Examples:**

- "Playing kickball is like playing baseball. You'll run around the bases in the same order."
- You can also ask if participants have ever done a similar activity before. "Raise your hand if you've ever made pancakes before. Okay, great. So, making cupcakes is similar to making pancakes in a lot of ways."

<sup>1</sup>Lent, R.C. (2012). *Overcoming textbook fatigue*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD. Retrieved from [http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/113005/chapter\\_s/Background-Knowledge@-The-Glue-That-Makes-Learning-Stick.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/113005/chapter_s/Background-Knowledge@-The-Glue-That-Makes-Learning-Stick.aspx)

<sup>2</sup>Draper, D. (ed.). (2010-2012). *Comprehension strategies: Making connections*. Retrieved from: <https://www.roberson.k12.nc.us/cms/lib/NC01000307/Centricity/Domain/3916/Making%20Connections.pdf>

### Ask Them to Make Connections<sup>2</sup>

Asking participants open-ended questions and allowing them space to give a response can help them connect to the activities and feel connected to your program.

**Examples:**

- Have you done something like this before?
- What does this remind you of from your life outside of the program?
- How did this activity make you feel? What was another time when you felt this way?

## Tips in Action!

[Watch](#) staff at Village Theatre make connections between new dance skills and young people's prior experiences.

## Want more two-minute tips?

Check out:

<https://depts.washington.edu/cqel/expand-ed-learning-opportunities/>

There you will find the latest tip, an archive of past tips, and a discussion board to connect with peers!