

# HOW TO BUILD POSITIVE WORK RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES

Counseling Partners of Los Angeles



## TEACHER COUNSELING

*CPLA offers counseling at its partner schools' teachers*

Interested in receiving 4 free, virtual, and confidential sessions from a trained mental health clinician? Reach out to [teachers@counselingpartnersofla.org](mailto:teachers@counselingpartnersofla.org) for a referral form. You help so many. You deserve help too.

Work can be challenging and stressful, and building collegial relationships may seem like just one more thing to do. However, creating and maintaining relationships with fellow teachers and administrators can increase your work satisfaction and teaching quality. Trust, collaboration, and fun are likely to result, making your work all the more enjoyable and productive. Read on for practical and easy tips you can help implement to foster a friendly atmosphere at your school, which will not only help you but also your students!

## About CPLA

The mission of Counseling Partners of Los Angeles is to support at-risk and under-served students living in Los Angeles by providing a low-cost, school-based program that delivers essential counseling and support services students and teachers need in order to grow toward their full potential emotionally, intellectually, morally and socially.

*“The most valuable resource that all teachers have is each other. Without collaboration, our growth is limited to our own perspectives.”*  
-Robert John Meehan



## WAYS TO BUILD CONNECTIONS WITH FELLOW TEACHERS

### *Show appreciation to your colleagues*

There is a plethora of research that demonstrates the power of gratitude in connecting people. Both the expresser and receiver can tap into the benefits. Simply acknowledging a colleague in the lunch room or employee lounge can defuse tension and stress, triggering feel-good neurotransmitters. If you would like to implement a more formal approach, consider forming a Gratitude Circle at your staff meetings. Everyone can go around and say one genuine thing they are thankful for pertaining to a colleague.

### *Create a Birthday Committee!*

Remembering a person's birthday helps them feel seen, forming an instant connection. Foster comradery amongst your staff by creating a group whose purpose is to celebrate birthdays! A card and a small gift can go a long way in uplifting morale, and you may find that the committee may group with time as people want in on the feel-good action of giving to others. The point is not to add more work to yourself but to find easy yet powerful ways to allow your coworkers to be celebrated.

### *Make efforts to find common ground*

Seek to truly understand your coworkers. Labels and stereotypes may have glimmers of truth, but they don't tell the whole story. Take a moment to put yourself in your coworker's shoes so you can understand them more completely. In return, you will most probably find they do the same with you. From this, an authentic and vulnerable relationship can form.

### *Faculty Meetings Can Be Both Practical & Supportive*

Faculty meetings are not necessarily only for transmitting information and making announcements. You can think about forming small groups, including a team building activity, and incorporating reflection and feedback times in meetings. Some ideas are below:

- 6 degrees of separation - List 5 things you and a fellow staff member have in common, then go around the room and find another person who shares at least one thing on your list.
- Save your Sanity - Share ways that you “save your sanity”, whether that's using a noise cancelling app to a budget tracker. Have a discussion around different life hacks you can use both inside and outside of the classroom.
- Mindfulness Scavenger Hunt - Put teachers into groups and have them go on a “scavenger hunt” from a student's perspective and take pictures along the way. They can find places like “where to hide from a teacher,” “best place to play handball,” or “great spot to eat lunch.” The point is to connect the teachers to the students' perspective while fostering team building.

## TIPS FOR HANDLING DIFFICULT WORK RELATIONSHIPS

**1. Take time to reflect on any positive past history** with the person you are having difficulty with. Think of ways that you've been able to work together in the past or moments when you enjoyed each other. This will help you gain perspective on the situation.

**2. Go inward.** When we are impatient, angry, or explosive, this behavior might increase the volatility of the situation, preventing any peace from occurring. Mindfully take a look at what you may be contributing to the issue and be willing to work on that.

**3. Identify what you want to be different.** Being specific about what you don't like and verbalizing it in an appropriate way can help the other person know what to change.

**4. Aim for a win-win situation.** If at all possible, make it a goal to accomplish what you desire while making the other person feel like they gained something as well.

**5. Reach out for support from a professional counselor.** Sometimes talking it out with a professional can help. Consider reaching out to CPLA's teacher counseling at [teachers@counselingpartnersofla.org](mailto:teachers@counselingpartnersofla.org)

