Hello!

We are very excited to be offering The Cultivating Connections group this semester. The knowledge and skills you will learn over the course of our group experience has the potential to change your relationship with yourself, your struggles, and your life – I know it has for me and for countless clients, friends, and acquaintances.

We also know the idea of “group” counseling can be intimidating so we want to discuss what the group will look like, the guidelines and what to expect for the first meeting.

**Choosing Group Counseling**

There are many benefits to group counseling that are well outlined in this brief article by the American Psychological Association: [Understanding Group Therapy](https://www.apa.org/topics/psychotherapy/group-therapy#:~:text=Open%20groups%20are%20those%20in,week%20session%20together%2C%20for%20instance.).

The Cultivating Connections group is based on offering knowledge and skills to help you reduce your anxiety around creating meaningful connections in your life, with friends, colleagues, family members, etc., as well as offering a supportive environment to practice those new skills.

This is not a “counseling” group insofar as requiring participants to share and process personal information in the group setting. In fact, you are not required to share any information (beyond your name) during the group, if you do not want to share. You ***are*** asked to be open to experience, to be respectful to the other group members, and -most importantly- to actively engage with the skills and practices discussed in the group. Think of this group as a small, friendly, class experience.

**Open Counseling Group**

The Cultivating Connections group is an open group. **The Fall 2025 group will be on Wednesday from 1pm-1:50pm on the following 4 dates: 9/10/25, 9/24/25, 10/8/25 and 10/22/25**. While participants are strongly encouraged to attend all sessions to get the most out of the group, if you cannot attend each meeting, that is okay. The nature of an open group is that participants can come and go as their needs dictate.

**Group Guidelines**

Each meeting will begin with an invitation for anyone who wants to share to have 3-5 minutes to check-in about how they are doing/any questions or issues that came up for them while they were engaging with that week’s skills. Sharing is not a requirement. Peers are encouraged to offer words of support, ideas, meaningful activities, etc. with each other during the group meeting.

* Groups will last approximately 50 minutes and will meet once every other week for 4 sessions.
* Please arrive on time for the group.
* You do not have to talk during the group. You can come to just listen and practice the skills.
* You can leave at any point if you feel uncomfortable.
* You can email the facilitator (Angela or I) between sessions with questions/thoughts you might not have felt comfortable asking in group or that come up for you while reading the material.
* You will have skills to practice between group sessions to help you start new habits and develop the connection skills we discuss.

**Confidentiality and Its Limitations**

* What is said in group, stays in group.
* Meetings will not and should not be recorded.
* Group members agree not to share personal information of other members (names, addresses, phone numbers, emails, etc.).
  + Any member who breaks confidentiality will be asked to leave the group.
* The group facilitators will breach confidentiality only under the following circumstances:
  + A member expresses intent to harm themselves or others
  + Suspected abuse or neglect of a minor, elder or disabled individual

**Safety Requirements**

* Group members agree not to take personal calls or have side conversations during the meeting.
* Group members agree to respect each other’s time, opinions/feelings, and privacy.
* Group members agree to listen without interruption.
* Group members agree to be accepting of each other’s differences and avoid making judgmental statements.

**Location of Group and Information for first meeting:**

**Location:** The group will be held in room **B223.**

**If you do not know where B223 is located, please come to the Counseling Support Center a few minutes before the start of group and we will show you to the classroom.**

See you soon!

Sincerely,

Katie and Angela

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Angela’s email: [ajancola@parkland.edu](mailto:ajancola@parkland.edu)