

How to increase newcomers' sense of belongingness: Lessons from social psychology

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Introduction

A strong sense of belongingness is associated with positive outcomes that could promote newcomer settlement.

The more people feel they belong:

- The less they suffer from physical and mental illness (e.g., Bolger et al., 2000; Walton & Cohen, 2011)
- The better they do in school (e.g., Walton et al., 2012; Walton & Cohen, 2007).
- The more likely they are to seize work opportunities (e.g., Gaucher et al., 2011; Murphy et al., 2007)

The goal of the current research was to create a fact sheet of best practices from social psychology to increase newcomers' sense of belongingness.

Method

We performed a literature review and catalogued empirical social psychological strategies to promote belongingness.

Strategies were summarized in plain language.

The full fact sheet will soon be available at <http://bit.ly/1QEbxB5>

Strategies for newcomers

Remind yourself of your social connections by writing about how you are connected to your community, friends, and romantic partner. (Schnabel et al., 2012)

Talk to people. Talk to your family and friends. Also make sure to talk to acquaintances who are part of your daily routine, like your grocer, classmate, or barista. (Sandstrom & Dunn, 2014)

Ask yourself, "What are my best qualities?" Writing these down lowers feelings of rejection and loneliness. (Park, 2007)

Strategies for organizations

Include minority and majority groups when providing diversity education and training. When majority group members have a sense of belonging in a multicultural group, they are more supportive of diversity efforts. (Plaut et al., 2011)

When recruiting female employees, ensure that the job advertisement wording is gender-balanced. Ads with more masculine wording (e.g., "compete" vs. "understand") lead women to believe that the workplace is male-dominated, making them think they won't belong. (Gaucher, Friesen & Kay, 2011)

Strategies for educators

Provide opportunities for contact between groups in school settings. Students who make interracial connections in their first semester of university have a higher sense of belonging and identify more strongly with their school. (Shook & Clay, 2012)

Promote diversity by embracing ethnically-based student groups. Sometimes schools adopt the "colour-blind" mentality, which suggests that everyone is the same. But group differences *do* exist, and on-campus groups show students that differences can be celebrated. For minority students, participating in an ethnic student group is linked to better academic performance. (Mendoza-Denton et al., 2008)



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