
our common thread
The Common Thread
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cover art by

Vitamin C onnection

Our in-person interactions are ones that we take for granted. The small “goodmorning”s on your way to school or work, the “how are you”s from friends, and the warm fuzzy “I love you”s from family. They’re so integral to our lives, our networks, and yet we’re experiencing a decline in-face-to face interaction. For one, online interactions have begun to dominate our life. Instead of seeing the body language, feeling the touch and hearing the tones in the voices of people we’re merely seeing a screen with words or likes or followers. Along with this, there is a newfound focus in the media on “protecting your peace” and “prioritizing yourself”. The message is that to be successful, you need to be independent and because of this there has been a shift away from community and more towards an individualistic lifestyle. These factors are both contributing to the decreasing amount of face-to-face interactions and mental and physical health are falling along with them.

Studies have shown that healthy relationships coincide with living longer, being able to more efficiently manage stress, anxiety and depression, and getting better quality sleep. All of these things in turn have their own individual benefits. Whereas on the other hand social isolation and a lack of connection increase the risk of premature death by 29%, mental health illnesses, dementia, obesity, and heart disease. Human beings need social interaction, it’s in our DNA and it is part of our biology. So it’s no surprise that without it, we are beginning to struggle. The human species has quite literally developed the need for social interaction through evolution. Our ancestors relied on the community for survival and now that we don’t, we are becoming more individualistic in our lifestyles. Community and connection are irreplaceable parts of life that are as essential as having a healthy diet, getting exercise and staying away from addictive substances, all practices that are advertised for maintaining health.

Even so, relationships, connection, and social interactions are not being as heavily encouraged as they should be. We’re experiencing a shift away from community driven lifestyles and toward ones where we prioritize our own health and wellbeing more than those around us. While that isn’t always a bad thing, it sometimes drives us away from spending valuable time with others that we need, even if we don’t think that we do. It’s important to have that community, however big or small, and to have people that you can turn to and rely on. It gives us a sense of security. Yet, our social connectedness can simply mean having conversations with people, telling someone to have a good day, or giving someone a hug.

The moral of the story is, go give someone a hug or tell them you appreciate them, get off your phone and talk to someone, and don’t feel embarrassed to need people, because we all do.

Ainsley G11

WOVEN WISDOM

MENTORSHIPS & ROLE MODELS

BY KRU MARK
DP PHYSICS TEACHER

After working with teens in science in summer and after school situations at MIT, I decided to join the teacher education program there and get my teaching credential. As part of that journey, I did my student teaching with Erica Wilson, a physics teacher at the Engineering School in an urban neighborhood in Boston.

Although Ms. Wilson was only 150 cm tall and a woman working in a school and community that was facing a lot of difficulties, with a single quiet look, she was able to quiet down a room full of tough, distracted students. This quiet power came from the fact that her students all knew that she really cared for them, and wanted them to reach their potential. She worked tirelessly to bring them to engineering and design firms in Boston that they would never otherwise be able to experience. Opening these pathways made a huge difference to some of our shared students.

I've always tried to emulate her ability to connect with students by showing them the power of physics ideas, but from a place of caring and a strong sense of community. I hope to bring this sensibility to my work with the amazing students here at UWC Thailand.

Interviewed by Scarlett G12

In the interim

We stepped on this sand
and years folded themselves
into paper boats
and bent into the tide.

Home calling from one horizon
and tomorrow from another,
you leaned beside me,
neck as warm as your silken smile,
and promised we'd carry this place
even through ten thousand miles.

So I hold you in sentences
in the rhythm of our conversations,
but words slip like veils
till i understand at last
that distance is just time.

Now the chapter is finished,
and i'm trying to store your sound
like sunlight in my sleeves
to stop the hasty seasons
from blowing away the leaves.

The future traces our eyes apart,
and you walk the other silvered street.
Our tether turns faint,
our hugs reach their fateful break,
and your whispers become waves
on a wire I can't feel.

but if the rain comes again
and we scatter like bright debris,
just know i'm searching for your shape
in every cloud I see.

Syna G12

Littler Connections

Kru Bianca's Grade 3

Eray G12

In our interview section we have Eray who had conversations with students from Kru Bianca's Grade 3 class in Lower Primary. These conversations revolve around building connections and friendships. Eray has talked with some of the students who were interested in having a talk about it, namely "Candy" and "Lark".

In the conversation I asked them some questions about their day and their social life on campus. Most of them were happily willing to talk about it and in some cases we switched the subject to a more comfortable one upon the student's request. It seemed that the school curriculum was actively encouraging building connections through its program. At the time we had the conversation the class was on a big project where a model city is being built by everyone, 1 city. And I was informed that before this project the students were building their own paper characters and showing it to their friends. Eventually, these characters ended up being featured in the arts classroom(Kru Dale's class).

As part of the encouragement, I can also add that according to some of the students I've talked to, Kru Bianca encourages them to sit next to someone that they don't often talk to or have never talked to. We see the importance of asking open-ended questions here, as it is important to first understand who they don't talk to. Sometimes it could be a personal reason for the student to not talk to them, but in our case it somehow seemed to have worked with those students who Kru Bianca encouraged (like Lark who I've mentioned earlier).

We can safely say that friendships and connections form an important part of the school atmosphere in lower primary, and interestingly of the school curriculum too.

Roommates Keeping the Peace

Sophia V. G"



Anaaya, Landhenn, Ariel

How do you guys deal with conflict?
We listen and we judge ;)
What is something unique that you do that keeps the peace?
We have dance battles together
What is something you guys do as roommates that you think others should do too?
The first person to wake up turns off the AC so the others don't wake up cold.
If your room was a country what would it be?
UMMMMMM, The Maldives because we're chill summer people :)



Salah, Ognjen

How do you guys deal with conflict?
We don't really have conflicts.
What is something unique that you do that keeps the peace?
Nothing; we genuinely just get along so well, the privacy in our room also helps to keep things chill.
What is something you guys do as roommates that you think others should do too?
Shared crashout before exams; We have the same preferences about a lot of things in the room like respectful silence and being considerate of each others wants and needs
If your room was a country what would it be?
Definetely Bosnia, because there's only two of us, so we can live privately and separately, while still having a functioning shared space



Katie, Ina, Madina

How do you guys deal with conflict?
We do Mongolian wrestling until one of us gives up
What is something unique that you do that keeps the peace?
We melt chocolate with the sun and we dip chips in it
What is something you guys do as roommates that you think others should do too?
We give each other massages
If your room was a country what would it be?
Mongolia, obviously because we are so Ghengis Khan leaders: strong, demanding, beautiful



Ibrahim, Taha, Yahya

How do you guys deal with conflict?
Ibrahim sleeps at 9pm and Taha is trying to sabotage that because he doesn't want him to grow taller. Yahya deals with the conflict by sitting outside the room all night
What is something unique that you do that keeps the peace?
We tell each other the harsh truth, to be completely transparent with each other
What is something you guys do as roommates that you think others should do too?
We cycle together
If your room was a country what would it be?
Switzerland, because our room is calm, organized, and feels emotionally stable

GOSSIP

(and its impact on friendships)

Picture this: You're new to a school; you haven't made any friends yet and you feel conspicuously alone. Someone starts mocking another student behind his back. You worry that if you don't join in, you'll be mocked next. You share a rumor you've heard about the other student, too.

(I'm the new student y'all, it was me). So, what I want to talk about is why we gossip, and the toll it actually takes on friendship and authentic connection.

In her text All About Love, Bell Hooks posits that people who feel they're lacking power often turn to gossip (91). This can be seen across workplace hierarchies, but it also applies to teenagers, both in school systems where adults hold power, and in friend groups where honesty might feel risky. Brené Brown captures gossip's appeal in Braving the Wilderness: "It's a seductive, reliable, and super easy way to connect with just about anyone" (135). Hooks further notes that if you don't feel you can speak up in the moment when something unfair happens, you get a "redo" if you gossip about that moment later (91). Both Hooks and Brown point to the same insight: Gossip can provide a shortcut to friendship, but it's a counterfeit form of intimacy.

This immediate gratification has a cost: gossip ruptures the very bonds it promises to create. Brown discovered this herself when she tried a no-gossip practice: several of her friendships were founded on gossip rather than genuine connection (135). Instead of gossiping as an outlet, develop the courage to be authentic and vulnerable, and to speak your truth directly. Your teen years are when you build habits of mind, including vulnerability and courage, both of which are required in real friendship. Do you have the courage to speak up in the moment, to build friendships that can survive honesty and disagreement?

So, what does this look like in practice? Real connection means being vulnerable enough to share your own struggles rather than analyzing someone else's. Think about the scenario with the new student feeling pressured to gossip – what kind of friendship do you think they were actually building?

Here's a test: Aim to have a fully gossip-free week, à la Brené Brown. Notice: Are any of your connections based primarily on gossip? If you discover you can't connect beyond gossip, it may be worth reconsidering that friendship. The friendships that remain, built on vulnerability and trust, will be worth the challenge.

Kru Elizabeth

Hungry together

Food fulfills a biological need, but the act of sharing food turns this function into something much more social and comforting. Historically, sharing food and resources meant sharing survival. So today, as people gather around a table to eat, they lower their guard, and food becomes a way to welcome conversation, becoming a representation of relational closeness across so many cultures and daily routines.

The collective identity that many people carry through food reinforces their shared values, and by bringing each of their connections to food into UWC, our canteen becomes a place to connect in the different ways we've been conditioned to at home. Dinnertime asks from us no pressure to articulate, no pressure to impress, and a break away from the overstimulating environment our campus turns into during school hours. It slows us down and gives our hands something to do and our eyes a place to rest as our conversations become less careful and our minds start to quiet. Conversations can flow more easily, and the atmosphere is softened by this shared nourishment.

Because our time here is short, our school is defined by movement, arrivals, departures and goodbyes, but sitting down to eat dinner offers a rare feeling of permanence, as people enter and leave the canteen, roll their eyes at the food, and stop by at your table for a chat. Dinnertime is less about the food, and more about sharing a communal experience. Maybe the lesson of sharing this experience is that we need to arrive, sit down, stay a little longer, and resist the instinct to rush away into our IAs and college applications. It's valuable, sometimes, to let the conversations unfold in pauses and words, and choose the presence of our community over the stresses of IB. Wherever we go next, it does well to keep making space for these evenings, one bite at a time.

Anonymous submission



GRACE RESTORED

Shalom's artwork



The God Who Sees You
Material: Woodcut

This piece was inspired from a Burmese song called "Unrelenting Love" that even in weariness and despair, a divine love never lets go. It portrays being guided forward by a hand that lifts with unconditional love which holds, and promises a future not defined by hopelessness.

Prodigal's return
Material: charcoal and pen

This work is inspired by the parable of the Prodigal son – a bible story of the son's rebellion and the return home with repentance after significant loss. It portrays the moment the father, full of mercy and forgiveness, embraces his returning child with unconditional love.



RELATIONSHIPS IN THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY:

DIVERSITY IS NOT A BARRIER TO LIVING TOGETHER. IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN, GROW, AND BUILD A MORE COMPASSIONATE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY.

LIVING AUTHENTICALLY:



Kru Ali, the Head of Physical Education at UWC Thailand, shared her journey as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. Her story is about discovering her identity, building meaningful relationships, and creating a loving family with her wife and child. Through living and working in different countries, Ali has experienced both acceptance and challenges, which has shaped who she is today.

"Coming out was not easy. Telling my family was one of the hardest things I have ever done. I felt nervous and unsure about how they would react. I was fortunate that my family chose to support me, and that support meant everything.

However, I know that not everyone has the same experience. Many people do not receive acceptance or support from their families, and that can be incredibly painful. No one should feel alone for being who they are."

Kru Ali hope for the future is that "coming out" will not have to be a big announcement. Straight people do not have to declare who they love — so one day, no one else should have to either. Being yourself should simply be normal.

Kru Ali shared that being part of the LGBTQ+ community has not always been easy. When she was younger, she felt pressure to hide who she was. Over time, she grew more confident and learned to embrace her identity. These experiences helped her develop empathy, compassion, and understanding for others who face discrimination or challenges in life.

Challenges faced by same-sex couples include:

- Visa and immigration issues
- Lack of legal recognition of marriage in many countries
- Parental rights and legal protection for children

These challenges show that equality has not yet been fully achieved, even in societies that appear open and accepting. Living together does not require everyone to agree, but it does require respect. Listening to others' stories and experiences helps us understand one another as human beings, rather than judging what is "right" or "wrong.

Kru Ali's story shows that living authentically takes courage, and that respect, empathy, and listening are essential for living together in a diverse community.

RELATIONSHIP TABOOS

Money

Money is a complicated discussion for many relationships, both platonic and romantic. Mainly because it forces people to be vulnerable about things that society has made us prioritise. It exposes things like status, creates spaces for judgement, and it breaks social norms about privacy. It also can sometimes create power dynamics between individuals when one has more money than the other. This is because of how our systems are structured in this society. We have learned to tie money directly into the identity of people. So we as people discriminate against others whether it be consciously or subconsciously based on this part of their "identity" that is often not in their control. But because we as a society have prioritised privacy when speaking of money this conversation has become taboo which puts many relationships at risk.

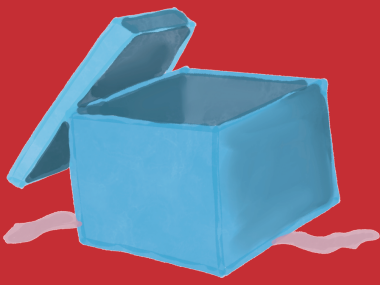


Politics

Unless you are an activist for your specific political discussions it is not a conversation that comes about very frequently because we have made it a sensitive topic. It is deeply tied to our personal values and it becomes difficult to be vulnerable with people, but that's why it's so important to have this discussion, to get an understanding of the person you are trying to have a relationship with, both platonic and romantic.

Expectations

Expectations may sound vague on paper but it is because it depends on the relationship and the person. What one expects from a relationship changes dynamics entirely. But people are often scared to communicate their expectations. People are afraid to say "I expect you to talk to me every day" or "I expect you to give me space" because they are placed as things that one should know about each other. But without this conversation both people are constantly living in this state of uncertainty. People become uncertain not only of what they want but also of what they think that the other person is willing to accept. They become nervous to have a conversation about what their relationship is and what it means to them as people. Not having clear expectations of each other can create an even more uncomfortable environment than just talking about these "taboo" issues.



Manuella G11

What makes UWC friendships hard?

Marceline- G12

"Let's hang out sometime."

Simple enough? Except when, for your German friend, it means "let's make concrete plans right now," your Palestinian friend is politely declining, and you are genuinely suggesting you meet up, but with no actual expectation of when. Welcome to UWC, where even basic friendship operates in different languages.

They sell you the dream: a campus of 200 students from 90 countries, united by shared values and big ideas. What they don't mention is that before you get to those profound 3 AM conversations about changing the world, you first have to navigate the minefield of simply trying to connect with someone whose entire framework for friendship is different from yours.

Take something as simple as conflict. You have your first disagreement with your roommate. You're direct, you say what's wrong because that's how you fix things. But she goes quiet, withdrawn. You think she's being passive-aggressive. She thinks you're being incredibly rude. The settled cultural script makes it hard for you to collaborate. And now you're living in 12 square meters together for the next two years.

The canteen becomes an anthropology lesson. Your punctuality is someone else's rigidity. Your enthusiasm is someone else's exhausting intensity. Your independence is someone else's coldness.

And humor? Forget about it. Your sarcasm and irony doesn't translate. Their jokes require cultural context you don't have. You laugh at the wrong moments. They're offended by what you thought was playful teasing. Comedy is supposed to bring people together, but here it's just another reminder of how far apart you actually are.

Even deeper your entire concept of what friendship means is being challenged. You grew up believing friends tell each other everything. Your class buddy believes privacy is a matter of respect. You think good friends push each other to open up. They think good friends know when to give space. Who's right? Both of you. Neither of you. This complex subtlety gives headaches.

This is what makes UWC friendship so hard: you're not just making friends, you're learning entirely new ways of being a friend. You're constantly questioning was that rude? Did I offend them? Are we actually close or am I projecting? Do they even like me or are they just being polite in a way I can't decode?

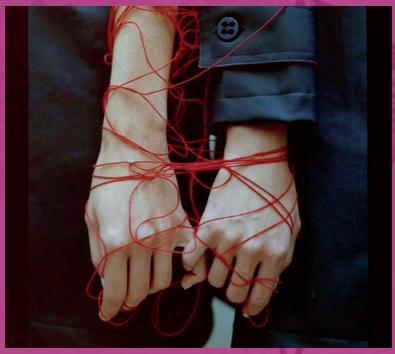
You're building bridges with materials you've never worked with before, reading instructions in languages you barely speak, all while trying to construct something meaningful before graduation tears it all apart anyway.

And somehow, ironically, sometimes it works.





Love Languages: Learning Affection



"What's your love language?"

The question is asked so casually, like asking for someone's star sign. As if it would reveal something about the person that explains them in a few simple words.

Words of affirmation? Quality time? Acts of service? Receiving gifts? Physical touch?

The idea was simple once. The five love languages were meant to describe the different ways people express and receive affection. A way to understand why one person writes long messages while another shows up early and stays late. Why does one fold laundry without being asked, or why does the other remember the smallest details just because they want to? Somewhere along the way, though, the language shifted.

"That's just not my love language."
"You're not loving me correctly."

What began as a tool for understanding slowly turned into a label: something fixed, something defended. Love stopped being something we tried to give, and started becoming something we evaluated.
Did it arrive in the right form? Was it delivered properly? Did it count? Was it relevant?

Samaira G12

What's often forgotten is that love languages were never meant to apply only to romance. They describe how people feel appreciated, not just desired. A parent who cooks every meal instead of saying "I love you." A friend who stays up late to accompany you on a difficult night. A teacher who checks in after class because they are worried. These gestures may not always look like affection, but they are built from it.

And often none of these actions of love can be categorised under one label. Yes, the simplification helps, but feelings rarely fit into a clean box. None of the love languages exists in isolation; the overlap for each and every simple act of affection is built from the sheer raw human feeling of love.

Loving someone often means speaking in an accent, fumbling for the right words, and allegedly getting it 'wrong' before getting it right. But that does not take away the true significance of the fact that someone cares.

The common thread isn't that we all love the same way. It's that, in different languages and seemingly imperfect forms, we keep trying to say the same thing: we care.

Khun Gemma and Khun Marbal



What is your favorite memory or moment together?

Khun Gemma: One of my favorite moments is watching our kids accomplish something and quietly acknowledging it together. Sometimes we just look at each other and say, “Good job for raising this one well.” It’s a simple moment, but it carries years of effort, patience, and shared responsibility.

Khun Marbal: One of my favorite moments together is when we sit down and plan the future, talking about our family, our goals, and the next steps in life. Those conversations remind me that we’re moving in the same direction and making decisions together. It’s reassuring to know we’re building forward as a team.

What do you think is the most important when you are choosing a partner?

Khun Gemma: For me, shared values matter most when choosing a partner. It’s about agreeing on the basics, trust, respect, communication, and how we show up for family. Those shared values are what help us make decisions together and stay connected, especially when life gets hard. We don’t always agree on everything, but we understand what matters to each other, and that makes a difference.

Khun Marbal: A strong beginning matters, starting as friends builds trust and comfort. Shared values guide important decisions, especially about family and commitment. Emotional maturity is key too: how someone listens, reacts, and takes responsibility; also pay attention to how a person handles pressure and change, because everyday life isn’t always easy. In the end, choose someone reliable, steady, and willing to grow with you over time.

What do you think is the most effective way to solve conflicts when you are building long-lasting relationships?



Khun Gemma: Learning to step back before reacting. Not every issue needs immediate resolution. Time, calm conversations, and understanding each other's limits help more than arguing to be right. Respecting each other even when we disagree keeps the relationship intact.

Khun Marbal: Silence. LOL. Seriously though, stepping away and not talking right away saves everyone from saying something they'll regret. A little space, a deep breath, and some time usually fix more than arguing ever could. Proven and effective.

What advice will you give to young people in building relationships?

Khun Gemma: I'd advise young people to start by being friends and really getting to know each other. Take time to see how the other person thinks, handles stress, treats people, and shows up in everyday situations. Don't rush the relationship,let it grow naturally. Strong relationships are built on trust, respect, and honest communication, not just attraction. The better you know each other before making big commitments, the more solid the relationship will be over time.

Khun Marbal: Look for someone who knows how to listen, not just hear you, but really listen. A good listening partner makes you feel understood, respected, and safe to be yourself.

Interviewed by Adelya G11

What's in
MY EMOTIONAL BAGGAGE

Ask these questions of your friends (or someone you hope to be a friend) and see what happens!

- **What is your most treasured memory?**
- **Your house, containing everything you own, catches fire. After saving your loved ones and pets, you have time to safely make a final dash to save any one item. What would it be? Why?**
- **If a crystal ball could tell you the truth about yourself, your life, the future or anything else, what would you want to know?**

-From NYT - The 36 Questions That Lead to Love

