Social Connection Scavenger Hunt Name:

This week, Dr. Santos encouraged us to make social connections. Our field trip this week will be to the mall to make social connections. Indeed, “Blue Zones” around the world have the highest number of people who live to 100. One of the key elements of these societies is that they have lots of connection.

This scavenger hunt encourages you to step out of your comfort zone, engage with others, and pay attention to the human aspect of wellness in a public space. Below is a list of tasks they can perform. Please note that the students should always respect others' privacy and comfort, asking for permission when necessary and understanding if someone does not want to participate.

**Social Interaction Scavenger Hunt: Wellness in Communication**

Objective: Experience and recognize the roles of communication, kindness, and human connection in personal wellness.

HUNT #1 Options

1. **Smile Mile:** Share a genuine smile with a stranger and see if they smile back. Reflect on how the interaction makes you feel.
2. **Compliment Corner:** Give a sincere compliment to a mall staff member or someone in line. Discuss with your group the reaction you receive and how it made you and the receiver feel.
3. **Direction Challenge:** Approach someone as if you’re a tourist needing directions to a specific store. Observe how willing they are to help and the way they communicate.
4. **Food Court Diplomacy:** At the food court or in a shop, ask 1-3 different people what they recommend to eat there. Notice the factors that may influence their suggestions (e.g., personal preference, health).
5. **Fashion Advice:** In a store, ask a fellow shopper or employee for their opinion on an outfit or accessory. This can be done while purchasing something to eat. Discuss first impressions and the importance of outside perspectives.
6. **Kindness Counts:** Perform an act of kindness for a stranger (e.g., holding the door open, helping carry shopping bags). Reflect on the experience with your group afterward.
7. **Cultural Inquiry:** Find items in the mall that represent different cultures. Politely ask the shopkeepers about the origin of these items and the stories behind them.
8. **Mindful Listening:** Start a casual conversation with a sitting stranger. Practice active listening, focusing entirely on their responses without planning your reply. Share your experience of the conversation dynamics with your group.
9. **Group Reflection (Post-Hunt):** Gather in a quiet area of the mall or a nearby location. Each group member should share their most memorable interaction of the day and discuss how these exercises can contribute to overall wellness.
10. **Artistic Appreciation:** Find a piece of art in the mall, such as a sculpture or painting. Ask a passerby what they think of it and discuss differing perspectives on beauty and expression within your group.

HUNT #2 Options

1. **Story from a Stranger:** Approach someone in the mall and politely ask if they can share a random happy memory they have associated with a mall or shopping. Discuss within your group how stories can connect strangers.
2. **Helping Hand:** Offer assistance to someone who looks like they're struggling with their shopping bags, a parent managing their children, or someone looking for a store. Reflect on their response and your feelings.
3. **Artistic Appreciation:** Find a piece of art in the mall, such as a sculpture or painting. Ask a passerby what they think of it and discuss differing perspectives on beauty and expression within your group.
4. **Music Moves Us:** If there is live music, a store playing music, or a music shop, ask someone nearby what they think about the music being played. Share within your group how music preferences can influence social connections.
5. **Message of Encouragement:** Write down positive messages on cards beforehand (e.g., "You’re doing great!" "Keep smiling!") and hand them to mall staff or cleaners to show appreciation. Discuss the importance of recognizing all members of a community. You could even just paste it on a table in the food court area.
6. **Generational Wisdom:** With respect, approach an elderly individual and ask them for one piece of advice they'd give to younger generations. Share and discuss the learning within your group.
7. **Nature in the Mall:** Many malls have indoor plants or garden areas. Ask someone nearby to share what they feel about the presence of green spaces in urban areas. Reflect on the role of nature in public wellness.
8. **Queue Conversations:** While in a queue, start a light conversation with someone ahead or behind you. Topics could include opinions on brands, the weather, or events. Post-interaction, discuss the feeling of inclusivity in communal spaces.
9. **Career Curiosity:** Find a store where you’re interested in the type of work they do and respectfully ask an employee about what they enjoy most about their job. Reflect on the diversity of happiness and fulfillment in careers.
10. **Group Gratitude (Post-Hunt):** As a concluding activity, sit together and share one thing you were grateful for during this scavenger hunt. Discuss how gratitude can improve mental health and social bonds.

*Conclusion:* End the scavenger hunt with an open dialogue about empathy, communal respect, and the collective human experience gathered from these diverse interactions

HUNT #3 Options

1. Take a Selfie with a mall security Guard 2. Compliment a Stranger 3. Ask a store employee for help or advice

4. Start a conversation with someone in line 5. Give a high five to someone 6. Give a stranger your opinion

7. Dance or sing along to the mall background music 8. Strike up a conversation 9. Try to barter for an item

10. Recommend a book/product to someone 11. Help someone 12. Thank a janitor or employee

13. Share a joke with someone 14. Make up your own item 15. Make someone Smile

Social interactions are foundational to our mental and overall health, affecting everything from our happiness to our longevity. Numerous studies have backed this up over the years. Below are some significant findings from reputable sources that highlight the importance of social relationships for health:

1. **Mental Health and Emotional Well-being:**
	* A study by Holt-Lunstad, Smith, and Layton (2010) published in "PLOS Medicine" analyzed data from 148 studies (over 300,000 participants) and found that individuals with stronger social relationships had a 50% increased likelihood of survival. This study suggested that the influence of social relationships on the risk of death is comparable with well-established risk factors like smoking and alcohol consumption, and it exceeds the influence of other risk factors such as physical inactivity and obesity.
		+ Reference: Holt-Lunstad, J., Smith, T. B., & Layton, J. B. (2010). Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review. PLOS Medicine, 7(7), e1000316. [Link](https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316)
2. **Stress Reduction:**
	* Research has indicated that social interactions can help to decrease levels of cortisol, the stress hormone. One study by Dickerson and Kemeny (2004) in "Psychological Bulletin" reviewed the literature on psychological stress and found that social support helps individuals cope better with stressful situations, reducing the negative impacts of stress on mental health.
		+ Reference: Dickerson, S. S., & Kemeny, M. E. (2004). Acute Stressors and Cortisol Responses: A Theoretical Integration and Synthesis of Laboratory Research. Psychological Bulletin, 130(3), 355–391. [Link](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2474765/)
3. **Improved Quality of Life and Longevity:**
	* Social relationships have been found to influence the health outcomes of the elderly, impacting their quality of life. The Harvard Study of Adult Development, one of the world's longest studies of adult life, started in 1938 and ongoing, found that close relationships, more than money or fame, are what keep people happy throughout their lives. The study revealed that those who fared the best were the people who leaned into relationships with family, friends, and community.
		+ Reference: Mineo, L. (2017, April 11). Good genes are nice, but joy is better. Harvard Gazette. [Link](https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2017/04/over-nearly-80-years-harvard-study-has-been-showing-how-to-live-a-healthy-and-happy-life/)

These studies underscore the importance of social connections in maintaining mental health, reducing stress, and improving physical health outcomes. They suggest that fostering strong relationships with friends, family, and community members is a critical aspect of overall wellness. Social health is integral to human well-being, and initiatives promoting social interaction can have substantial benefits for individual and public health.