

## Connecting with self and others: A workshop by Ms. Gloria Burrett

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Venue: Senior school library

Date: 6<sup>TH</sup> July

All our emotions, thoughts, and actions are interconnected and there can be no real connection with others if we are not aware of who we really are from within.

A workshop on connecting with self and others was conducted by renowned psychotherapist, Ms. Gloria Burrett. The session started with creating the right space and developing a sense of belonging. The process of making us sit in a circle and adjusting our posture in a way that we were able to see everyone else depicted the metaphor of the physical vessel. The physical vessel represents our sense of belonging and commune. We fill and empty it as we journey through life. Feeling a sense of community is the basis of understanding connection and once that has been comprehended, we allow ourselves to connect with people in a deep, meaningful way. We were engaged in numerous activities and each activity represented the different elements of connection.

In the first activity, we had to imagine that we are swimming in an ocean and save ourselves from drowning by huddling together in a group of three or four people. The underlying message was of embracing uncertainty in life and stepping out of our comfort zones as that would facilitate connection with others. This was followed by a game of dot ball wherein two groups were made; one which was actively involved in playing the game and the other group of the 'outsiders' who were not allowed to play the game based on certain arbitrary rules. This activity helped us to reflect on how consciously and unconsciously, we make arbitrary assumptions and take decisions for others based on our definition of what's best for them. The message conveyed through this activity was to stop being so immersed in our own lives, step outside our narrow boxes, and develop a sense of empathy for people on the fringe. There can be in fact no real connection if we don't spare a thought for others. After this, everyone shared an instance wherein we had formed a new connection, reconnected with old friends or family members during the summer break. It made us rethink the concept of connecting with others. Sometimes when we are disconnected with our congenial surroundings, we allow ourselves to forge unique connections.

For the next exercise, we all formed pairs and had to choose someone we would like to get to know better. The activity focused on active listening and trust. Each person shared with the other something about his/her life or any instance where they had felt disconnected or isolated. The other person had to listen without giving any opinion or disrupting the conversation. The purpose was to make us realize what a true connection looks like when a space of active listening, non-judgmental approach and mindfulness is created. Many a time, we fail to connect with others because we shut ourselves out. Every negative thought creates silos of isolation and prevents us

from connecting with the other person. Forging a connection requires us to be vulnerable and trust the other person. It is an amalgamation of belief, conscious listening, and intuition. Through this activity, we were made to ponder about meaningful connection through the depth of sharing our intricate thoughts and emotions with others.

This was followed by the 'Bucket Activity'. For this particular activity, Ms. Gloria read out different situations and we were supposed to pour a cup of water into the empty bucket for every situation that we could relate to. It was an exercise that allowed us to introspect and acknowledge the reasons that disconnect us from others. Being conscious of the inner obstacles which hinder us from forming a connection with others helped us to understand our own selves in a better way. It was like rediscovering, scarping off our inner layers and confronting some uncomfortable parts of our self. The last task in the slew of activities involved dividing ourselves into groups of six and washing one another's feet. The beautiful message of the activity was of dissolving grudges and letting go of thoughts that disconnect us from others. Until and unless, we do not confront or attempt to resolve an issue by conveying it to the other person, a connection can never be nurtured, rediscovered or even get initiated in the first place.

The workshop was an insightful and enriching experience. It enabled us to delve deeper into the mechanisms of inner engineering of the self and discover the recipe of the blissful mind. It is only through an awareness of our inner dimensions that we truly connect with our self, discover the sea within (Innsaei), and utilize the inner compass to form a true connection with others. Our connection with our own self and others encourage growth, insight, and new ways of thinking.

**"I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the connection." ~ Brene Brown**



