



## Breakout Session 1B: **The Power of Connection: Fostering Social Support for Youth Wellbeing**

Strong social connections are a vital buffer against life's challenges. A sense of community and belonging profoundly shapes a young person's resilience and mental health. This discussion explores how we can intentionally cultivate environments, in families, schools, and communities, where meaningful relationships flourish and provide a crucial safety net for youth wellbeing.

**Session Time: 11.25 AM - 12:15 PM (EST) - 50 Minutes**

**Zoom Link:** <http://foryoupage.org/2025JoinNow>

	Panelists	Talking Points & Questions
	Glen Koh (Moderator)	
	Mercy Mkandawire	Beyond just "having friends," in what specific ways do strong social bonds protect a young person's mental health and build their resilience against stress and adversity?
	Marx Wang	How can we intentionally design physical and virtual spaces, from school clubs to community programs, that encourage genuine connection and combat the rising tide of loneliness among young people?
	Kate Barranco	Not all youths find it easy to connect. How do we ensure that social environments are inclusive and supportive for marginalized youth who might be at the greatest risk of social isolation?
		What is the crucial role of trusted adults, like teachers, coaches, or mentors, to provide a different and vital

		layer of social support that complements peer relationships?
		In an age of social media, how do we help youths distinguish between superficial interactions and authentic, supportive connections that nurture their wellbeing?