



BELONGING GOALS

What is a Belonging Goal?

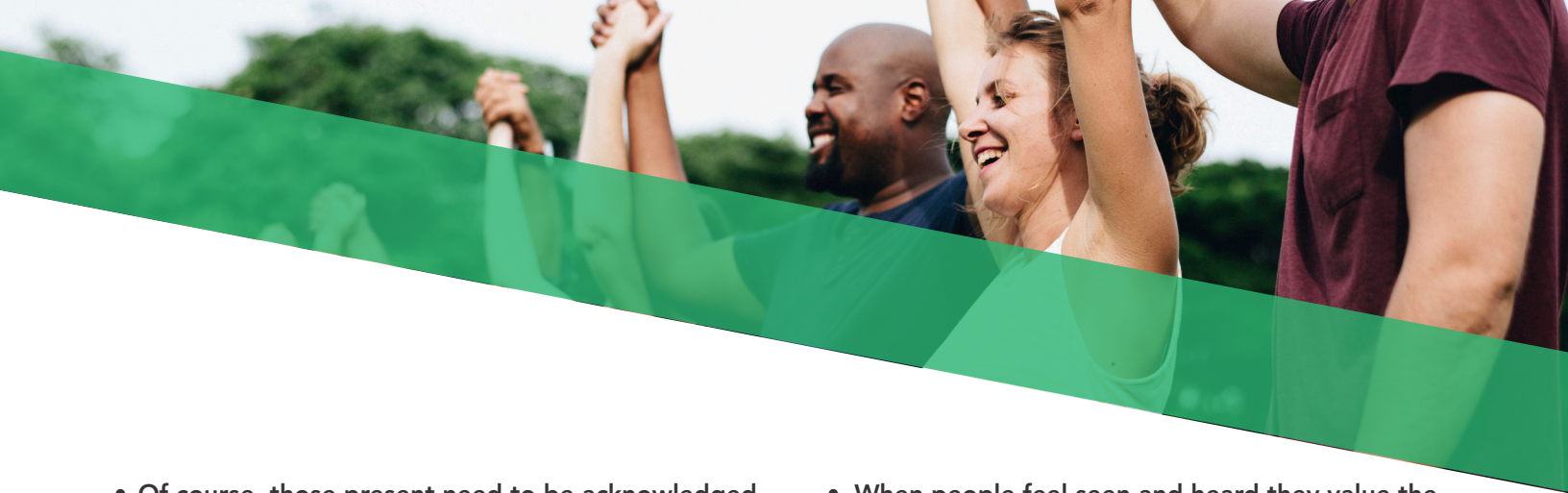
A belonging goal is a specific goal focused on designing events and programs more intentionally to ensure that a sense of belonging occurs. Setting the goal is an important and sometimes difficult step in the design process. The first of our Culture of Belonging Principles is to always start with belonging as a goal.

Start by intentionally designing gatherings to generate authentic, meaningful connections for more people. Set specific, observable, or measurable goals for your event or program and measure: not how many people attend, but who attends, how they interact with one another and the quality of those interactions (authentic rather than superficial), what they do with those connections, is it a one-time meeting or a new relationship (follow-up).

Ask yourself: What do we want participants to feel, know or do as a result of showing up?

What are the underlying assumptions that we have when we set belonging goals?

- **People want to feel that their presence matters.**
It is not the logistics or decorations that move people or make them feel they belong (although these definitely can be designed to contribute to the sense of belonging), but instead, it's how people feel, that their presence truly matters.
- **Being remembered and seen goes a long way to building a culture of connection and belonging.**
Never underestimate the powerful effect of remembering others – being remembered builds trust, and is a sign that someone else sees us as valued individuals whose presence matters.



- Of course, those present need to be acknowledged, but no less important is acknowledging those who aren't present. People need to know that their absence is noted and they are missed. Setting a regular practice of connecting with people who couldn't be there sends a powerful message throughout the group that each person, present or not, matters.
- When people feel seen and heard they value the space they are in and contribute to it. Assuming people will just make their own connections when thrown in a room can backfire and undermine a sense of community. When people have a structured opportunity to be heard, they are more likely to feel they belong and are part of something.

What Types of Belonging Goals are There?

When you set Belonging Goals, clarify what you are trying to achieve and what will success look like.

Types of Belonging Goals include how people:

- Connect with each other
- Contribute/help lead
- Feel they matter and belong
- Feel valued/seen for their unique assets

How Can You Achieve your Belonging Goals?

- Structure the chairs in the room in a way that promotes connection – where everyone sees each other or sits around small round tables, or perhaps get rid of the tables altogether.
- Eliminate random seating at luncheons/dinners – assigned seating is an opportunity to help people make new connections.
- Regularly open up with an Opening Ritual prompt to deepen acquaintance and enable others to learn something meaningful about someone else (see Opening and Closing Ritual Guide).
- Have people work in small groups to enable connection and an opportunity to talk.
- Ask others to take part in the design and leadership of an event or program; set up committees in which people can contribute their time and skills.
- Incorporate activities that identify similarities and encourage deeper connection.
- Support staff and volunteers to identify and encourage guests to connect.
- Recognize first-time participants or significant events that have happened in people's lives.

This practice is a mindset shift that requires building new habits, discipline, and skills. It's like putting on "belonging glasses," once you wear them, nothing will look the same again.

What are some examples of Belonging Goals?

- Increase the number of participants involved in the design and planning of the event
- Each participant has at least one opportunity to share or speak up during the meeting
- Every participant makes at least one new connection
- Participants learn something meaningful or personal about someone else
- Participants are recognized for their unique selves
- Participants return and bring their friends