THE LIFE LITERACY PROJECT
CAREER READINESS CIRCLE

VOLUME II · EDITION 01
PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK

A WORKSHOP IN GENUINE CONNECTION

Networking *Circle.*

Building genuine connections.
Confidence for life.

FACILITATED WITH

Natalie Goldwyn

Exploring possibilities.
Building futures.

I — WELCOME & FRAMING

A quieter idea of *networking.*

Before we begin, set down the version of networking you've seen on LinkedIn and in movies. That isn't what we're practicing today.

Networking, when it's real, is the slow work of building genuine relationships with people whose lives intersect with yours. It is curiosity. It is being interested before you ask to be interesting. It is the willingness to ask one honest question and listen to the answer. It is something **introverts often do better than extroverts**, because it rewards attention, not volume.

This workbook belongs to you. Write in it. Cross things out. Disagree with it. Come back to it. The goal of these next ninety minutes is not to make you outgoing, or strategic, or polished. The goal is to give you a more honest, lower-pressure relationship with the skill of connection — one that will serve you for the rest of your life.

WHAT YOU'LL LEAVE WITH

- A way of introducing yourself that feels like you, not a pitch
- A small library of questions that open real conversations
- A map of the people already in your network — including the ones you didn't count
- A clearer sense of what you want from your relationships, and what you offer
- A two-week plan you can actually do

A GENTLE REMINDER

You are not behind. Most adults are still learning this.

Nervousness is not a flaw. It usually means you care.

You don't have to be the loudest. You have to be the most curious.

> *Networking is just friendship with the volume turned down and the patience turned up.*
>
> A NOTE FROM NATALIE

CAREER CONNECTION

Most jobs, internships, and college opportunities are not won through applications alone. They are unlocked by someone who already knows you a little — a teacher, a parent's friend, a former coworker, a person you sat next to once. Learning to build and tend those threads is among the most useful skills nobody teaches in school.

TODAY'S MOVEMENTS

- **I** — An invitation
- **II** — Connection constellations
- **III** — What does this word mean to you?
- **IV–VI** — Introductions, questions, interviews
- **VII–IX** — Mapping, debriefing, choosing
- **X** — Where you go from here

II — CONNECTION CONSTELLATIONS

Find the person, not the answer.

Move around the room. Find someone who can honestly say *yes* to each square below. Ask them about it — not just whether the answer is yes, but the story behind it. Write their first name in the box. **You can only use the same person twice.**

Has changed their mind about a career they once wanted	Speaks more than one language at home	Has met someone they admire in real life	Knows what they want to study, and why	Has taught themselves something this year
Would rather listen than talk	Has reached out to a stranger and gotten a reply	Has had a mentor who wasn't a teacher	Has read a book that changed something	Knows a craft most people in this room don't
Has had a job, paid or unpaid	Has lived in another city, state, or country	*Free Square — introduce yourself first*	Has a family member in a job they're curious about	Has spoken in front of a group and survived it
Knows the name of a college they're considering, and why	Has made something they're proud of	Has helped someone younger figure something out	Is currently the first in their family to pursue a path	Has cold-messaged someone on a platform like LinkedIn
Believes networking is mostly fake (be honest)	Has friends across very different groups	Asks questions before giving opinions	Knows how to remember a name they just heard	Wants the kind of career nobody around them has

AFTER THE ACTIVITY

Which square made you talk longer than you expected to?

ONE THING I LEARNED ABOUT SOMEONE IN THIS ROOM

III — PERSONAL REFLECTION

What does this word mean to you, *honestly?*

Before we go further, take five quiet minutes. Don't perform. Don't write what you think the workshop wants. Write the truth in your own handwriting. You'll come back to these answers at the end of the day.

WHEN I HEAR THE WORD "NETWORKING," THE FIRST FEELING THAT SHOWS UP IS…

A SPECIFIC MOMENT I ASSOCIATE WITH THAT FEELING:

THE VERSION OF NETWORKING I'VE SEEN MOST OFTEN IS…

WHO IN MY LIFE DOES THIS WELL, AND WHAT DO I NOTICE THEM DOING?

HOW COMFORTABLE I CURRENTLY FEEL

Introducing myself to someone new
NOT ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ VERY

Asking someone a follow-up question
NOT ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ VERY

Reaching out to an adult I admire
NOT ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ VERY

Following up after a first conversation
NOT ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ VERY

Asking for help without feeling embarrassed
NOT ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ VERY

" **PRO TIP FROM NATALIE**

If a number on this scale feels low, it's not a problem to fix today. It's just information. The number doesn't predict your future. Your practice does.

> *The word networking made me uncomfortable for years. I'd rather call it paying attention to people on purpose.*
>
> WHAT STUDENTS SAY

IV — THE INTRODUCTION CHALLENGE

The art of the simple introduction.

A good introduction is not a pitch. It's a door — one sentence that gives the other person something to ask about. Most students try to fit their whole identity in. The best ones leave room for the conversation that comes next.

The template

Hi, I'm *YOUR NAME*. I'm *A GRADE OR CONTEXT* at *WHERE*, and right now I'm interested in *A REAL CURIOSITY*. *A QUESTION, AN OPENING, OR WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE*?

The last sentence is the most important. It hands the conversation back.

Three voices, same person

An introduction should shift slightly depending on where you are. Same truth, different register.

CASUAL · AMONG PEERS

"Hey, I'm Maya. I go to Erasmus and I've been getting weirdly into how cities are designed. What's been on your mind lately?"

SEMI-FORMAL · A FAMILY FRIEND

"Hi, I'm Maya — Sarah's daughter. I'm a junior at Erasmus, and I've been curious about urban planning. My mom mentioned you used to work in city government?"

PROFESSIONAL · AN EVENT

"Hello, I'm Maya Lin, a junior at STAR Early College. I'm exploring urban planning and design. I'd love to hear what drew you to your field."

Your turn — write three

CASUAL

SEMI-FORMAL

PROFESSIONAL

" IF THIS FEELS HARD, TRY THIS

Read your introduction out loud once, slowly. If you sound like a brochure, cut a word. If you sound like a person, you're done. The goal isn't smooth. The goal is real.

V — CONVERSATION MASTERY

Conversation is mostly listening.

The students who get remembered are not the ones with the most polished answers. They are the ones who ask one question that surprises the other person, then actually listen to what comes back. Below: a library of questions to borrow when your mind goes blank. Mark three you'll try this week.

CURIOSITY · OPENERS

- *"What's something you've been working on lately?"*
- *"How did you end up doing what you do?"*
- *"What are you reading or watching right now?"*
- *"What's surprised you about this year?"*
- *"What brought you to this event?"*

DEPTH · GOING BELOW THE SURFACE

- *"What's the part of your work most people don't see?"*
- *"What did you believe at my age that you don't now?"*
- *"What's a hard thing about your field nobody warned you about?"*
- *"What would you do differently if you started over?"*
- *"What advice do you actually disagree with?"*

CONNECTION · CLOSING & FOLLOWING UP

- *"Is there someone you'd suggest I talk to next?"*
- *"What's one thing I could read or watch on this?"*
- *"Would it be alright if I followed up in a few weeks?"*
- *"What's the best way to reach you?"*
- *"Thank you. What you said about ___ will stay with me."*

THE FIVE LISTENING MOVES

- ☐ **Eye contact, not stare.** Look at one eye, then the other, then briefly away.
- ☐ **Ask one follow-up before answering.** "Say more about that." "What do you mean by ___?"
- ☐ **Repeat back the part that landed.** "So you're saying ___. That makes sense."
- ☐ **Notice what they're not saying.** Tone, hesitation, what they get animated about.
- ☐ **Take a one-second pause.** Most people talk too fast because silence feels expensive. It isn't.

FOR INTROVERTS (AND ANYONE WHO'D RATHER OBSERVE)

You do not have to be the most talkative person in the room to be the most memorable. Prepare one good question before you walk in. Ask it. Listen for what surprises you. Ask one more.

Two careful questions, well-timed, will out-perform fifty minutes of small talk.

> *People will forget what you said. They will not forget that you asked.*
>
> PRO TIP FROM A FACILITATOR

VI — THE CURIOSITY INTERVIEW

A short interview, between strangers.

Find a partner you haven't worked with yet. You'll take turns. **Eight minutes each way.** Three questions, three follow-ups. Don't rush. The protocol below is yours to keep — you can use it for the rest of your life, with adults, mentors, classmates, anyone you'd like to know more deeply.

1

Begin with a present-tense question.

What's something you're spending a lot of time thinking about lately? The point is to find what's *actually* on someone's mind, not what they'd put on a résumé.

Follow-ups: *"What got you into that?" · "What's the part that's hard?" · "Who else thinks about this?"*

2

Move to a turning-point question.

When did you realize you wanted to do this, or be like this, or care about this? Look for the story, not the explanation. Stories are how people actually remember their own lives.

Follow-ups: *"How old were you?" · "What were you doing instead, before?" · "Did anyone see it before you did?"*

3

End with an opening question.

If you had unlimited time this year, what would you spend it on? Or: what's something you'd love to learn but haven't found the way in yet? You're not solving anything. You're listening for what they light up about.

Follow-ups: *"What would the first step look like?" · "Is there a person you'd want to talk to?" · "How could I help?"*

AFTER THE INTERVIEW — FOR THE LISTENER

What's one thing you learned about your partner that surprised you?

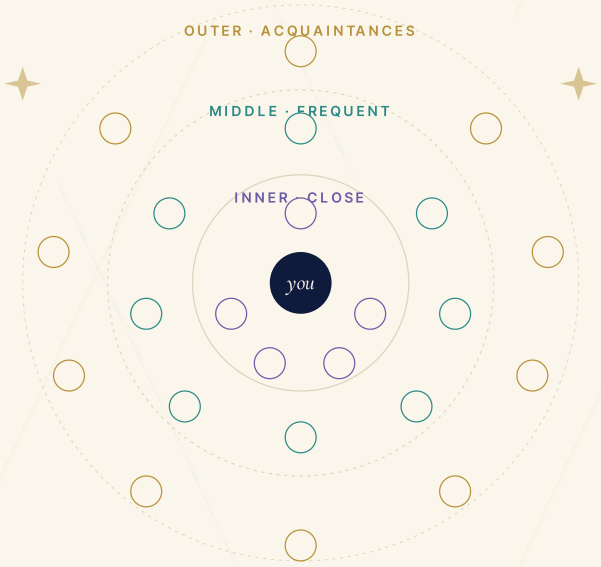
AFTER THE INTERVIEW — FOR BOTH

What's one question you wish they had asked *you*?

VII — NETWORK CONSTELLATION MAP

Map your constellation.

You already have a network. You just haven't drawn it. Write a name in each ring — people you actually know, however loosely. The closer to the center, the more often you talk. **Stars** are people whose work or lives you admire. **Bridges** connect you to a world you'd like to learn about — they don't have to be famous, just one step ahead.



CATEGORIES TO LOOK FOR

- **Family & extended family** — parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, family friends
- **School** — teachers, counselors, coaches, alumni, peers
- **Work & activities** — coworkers, neighbors, religious community, club members
- **Online** — people you've followed or messaged across platforms
- **Bridges** — older students, recent graduates, a parent's friend in a field you're curious about

STAR & BRIDGE

Mark a ★ next to two people whose paths you admire.

Mark a ↗ next to one person who could introduce you to a world you'd like to learn about.

WHAT I NOTICE ABOUT MY MAP

A NAME I WANT TO MOVE CLOSER TO THE CENTER THIS YEAR

VIII — DEBRIEF & VALUES SORT

What made it feel real?

Think back to a conversation today that felt *good* — one where you forgot you were practicing. Don't think about content. Think about **behaviors.** What did the other person do? What did you do? Specific moves, not vibes.

THE MOMENT I NOTICED THE CONVERSATION SHIFT

WHAT MY PARTNER DID THAT MADE ME TRUST THEM

A QUESTION THAT OPENED MORE THAN I EXPECTED

WHAT I'D DO DIFFERENTLY IN MY NEXT FIRST CONVERSATION

> ” CAREER CONNECTION
>
> The specific behaviors you just named are the same ones interviewers look for: curiosity, listening, honest follow-up. Naming them lets you practice them on purpose.

Values alignment sort

These are eight qualities people look for in real relationships. Rank them **1–8** for what matters most to *you* right now. Write the number in each box. There is no right answer. There's only your honest answer.

- ☐ **Trust** — I can rely on what you say
- ☐ **Curiosity** — You ask questions and listen for the answer
- ☐ **Reciprocity** — We both give, not just one of us
- ☐ **Growth** — You make me think differently
- ☐ **Honesty** — You tell me what's true, kindly
- ☐ **Patience** — You don't rush me
- ☐ **Generosity** — You share what you know, freely
- ☐ **Steadiness** — You show up over time, not just once

MY TOP THREE, AND WHY

IX — MYTHS, MINDSETS & GROWTH

What we've been told about networking, gently challenged.

Most of what young people believe about networking comes from movies, TV, parents working hard, or social media. Some of it is true. Most of it is half-true or out of date. Mark the myths you've heard. Then sit with the reframe.

~~"Networking is for extroverts."~~	→	**It's for the curious.** Quiet people who ask good questions out-network the loudest person in the room.
~~"It's about using people."~~	→	**It's about being useful.** The best networkers think first about what they can give. Generosity is the engine.
~~"You need to know important people."~~	→	**You need to know people who'll know important people in ten years.** Right now, that's your classmates.
~~"If they don't reply, they don't care."~~	→	**They're busy.** A polite follow-up after a week is not annoying. It's professional.
~~"I have nothing to offer yet."~~	→	**You have honest attention, fresh perspective, and time.** Adults rarely get all three.
~~"Cold-messaging is desperate."~~	→	**A short, specific, well-written message is how careers start.** Read their work. Reference it. Ask one real question.

THE MYTH THAT LIVED IN ME THE LONGEST

WHAT CHANGED TODAY

A MINDSET TO TAKE WITH YOU

Stop trying to be impressive. Start being interested. The first will exhaust you. The second will build the rest of your life.

X — COMMITMENT & VISION

A two-week practice. *Small, real, doable.*

Pick one micro-action per day. They should each take fewer than fifteen minutes. The point is not heroic effort. The point is consistency. Cross off as you go. Skip rest days or use them to follow up on what you started.

Day 01 Send a thank-you to someone who helped you this month	**Day 02** Ask one adult in your life one Curiosity question	**Day 03** Look up one career; note who you know who might know more	**Day 04** Add one new name to your Network Constellation map	**Day 05** Practice your introduction out loud, once	**Day 06** Reach out to one older student, alumnus, or recent graduate	***Day 07*** *Rest. Notice who you thought of this week.*
Day 08 Follow up with anyone who responded last week	**Day 09** Ask a teacher about their own path before teaching	**Day 10** Send one cold message: specific, short, one real question	**Day 11** Introduce two people in your life who don't know each other	**Day 12** Re-read your map. Choose one person to move closer.	**Day 13** Reflect: what changed this week in how you talk to people?	***Day 14*** *Rest. Plan one ask for next month.*

A letter to your future self

Imagine yourself five years from now — in a job, a program, a place you can almost see. What kind of *connector* do you want to be by then? Write a short paragraph addressed to that person. Tell them what you're committing to, today, in service of them.

Dear future me,

— signed,

THE LIFE LITERACY PROJECT

Certificate *of* Connection

Networking Circle Workshop · Volume II · Edition 01

PRESENTED TO

your name here

PARTICIPANT

In recognition of meaningful work in *genuine human connection* — the practice of curiosity, listening, and care toward people in this room and beyond it. May the relationships you build from here serve you, and serve them, well.

FACILITATOR · NATALIE GOLDWYN

DATE

THE LIFE LITERACY PROJECT · CAREER READINESS CIRCLE

Exploring possibilities. Building futures.