

Connection

Topic at a glance

This session centers on connection and support. While burnout is influenced by many factors, evidence increasingly suggests that social connection, belonging, and support play an important role in helping individuals thrive at work.

This month's leadership practice

Participants had two conversations: one with a direct report about their experience of connection, support, and belonging within the team, and one with a peer or mentor about their own sources of support.

Suggested session flow

Welcome & check-in · 5 min

Confidentiality reminder, then a quick opening question: "Round-robin: first name, role, why you joined, plus an icebreaker (early bird or night owl? coffee or tea? beach or mountains?)."

Discussion · 20–30 min

Read the prompts below, then let the group choose one or two to explore.

Open conversation · 30–60 min

Shift into open conversation over the meal.

Wrap-up · 5 min

Confirm the next date, time, and location. Record attendance. Submit for reimbursement.

Discussion prompts

1. When you think about your own experience of demanding work periods, have you noticed a connection between exhaustion and feeling disconnected from others? What did that look like for you?
2. In the past, what has helped you build connection and social support among your team?
3. What did you discover about your own sources of support?
4. What did you learn about whether your direct report feels connected and supported?
5. How can we recognize when someone on our team might be struggling with connection? What signals could we watch for?

Tip of the month

Keep in mind common discussion pitfalls:

- Jumping immediately to solutions
- Turning peer discussion into advice-giving
- Focusing only on workload
- Treating coaching as always better than advising
- Framing change communication around resistance rather than understanding

Session checklist

- Confirm the date, time, and location — and make a reservation where possible
- Review this month's topic and discussion prompts
- Host the session
- Record attendance
- Submit for meal reimbursement

Meal reimbursement

1. **Group leader pays for the meal** — P-Card or personal credit card.
2. **Submit the following to the group leader's department:**
 - Full list of faculty attendees (no guests or spouses)
 - Discussion agenda or topic
 - Itemized receipt
3. **Department creates a Concur report** using SpeedType **AEF CU THRIVE COMMEN GRP PILOT 63506627**.
 - Report title format: **THRIVECIRCLE[LastName FirstInitial]**
4. **Department reimburses the lead faculty member** in accordance with guidelines.

Fiscal guidelines

- **Reimbursement limit is \$125 per meal.**
- One meal per participant per month may be reimbursed during the six-month program.
- Maximum of six reimbursed meetings per six-month program.
- **Alcohol is not reimbursable.**
- Maximum allowable tip is 20%.
- Limit gatherings to consented participants assigned to your group — no guests or spouses.
- Meetings may include coffee or meals, and venues are chosen by the group.
- Non-meal activities (bowling, for example) are paid personally by participants.