Social Engagement in Online Learning

Online learning can increase a sense of isolation. In traditional pedagogy, the act of thinking together in a classroom builds a sense of community and connectedness. This may be missing in an asynchronous learning environment, as meaning-making through non-verbal cues, such as tone and gestures, is absent.

Barriers

Sense of isolation in online environments

Asynchronous activities may create a feeling of forced or artificial communications

Mature online learners may be less likely to develop relationships in online classes

Concerns about being polite or saving face may downplay expertise and impact learning goals

Cultural tendencies can affect interaction and collaboration

Evidence-Based Strategies

- Design a community-building event to bring learners together in a safe space
  - This may help equity-seekers voice their needs
- Try different platforms, such as social media, to increase interaction and meet the needs of diverse learners
- Create collaborative events and flexible engagements to facilitate group connections
- Encourage students to reach out to their peers, create a support group, or make a chat and study group
- Provide opportunities for students to share stories about how they are relating to the content
  - Use icebreakers in synchronous sessions for students to share parts of themselves
- Give groups the tools they need to succeed, such as rubrics, guidelines, and check-ins

For more data and context, read the full report from ABLE Research Consultants