

## **Acceptance, Belonging and Connection: Educations new A B C's**

As important as the ABC's in a literary sense are to learning and becoming a productive contributor to society, the new ABC's are even more critical. Acceptance, Belonging and Connection are three basic concepts that, once understood, can literally change how we perceive each other and ourselves. This shift in perception affects the role we play in making the world a better place to be.

Acceptance and belonging are two of the highest needs on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and are traits that all of humanity shares. Acceptance of ourselves as a starting point enables us to more easily accept others just as they are. Finding our strengths and celebrating them can help us more fully realize the potential of every human being, and once these strengths are recognized, we can more easily accept others as divinely guided individuals. In today's world, tolerance is not quite it. It was a stepping stone to acceptance, and now to truly evolve, we must learn to accept not only each others strengths, but our darker sides as well. We all contain the dualities of good and bad, lightness and darkness, if you will. Seeing this to be truth puts us on even ground, where the playing field has been equalized. True acceptance brings with it a certain inner peace as we no longer focus on our shortcomings. Acceptance brings freedom from our restrictive walls, dissolves the barriers between others and us, and builds bridges to peace.

It is said that a sense of belonging is really what is behind involvement in gangs and gang activity. When we think of the word gang, we reel with thoughts of violence, threats and crime. But what was lacking for these gang members prior to joining was a sense of belonging. As humans, we are part of a tribal society. When we feel we don't belong, our tendency is to go inside and shut ourselves off from the world. A simple "hello" to someone who has shut themselves off is a simple act that can be a lifeline for a person who feels they don't belong.

We all want to belong in some way, and belonging then leads us to explore our connections with each other. We are connected in so many ways, seen and unseen. If we look deeper with the help of Quantum physics, we are all simply energy. For when you break down matter into its smallest parts, energy is all that is left. We are all made of the same energy, and share it's forces. Though it is easy to perceive that we are each separate bodies occupying space, this way of looking at the world only divides. If we can see into the truth that we are connected at this deepest level of energy, it can create a shift in our consciousness. This shift in thinking reshapes how we see each other, and how we treat all living beings on the planet.

Use the Global Peace(s) puzzle as a tool to assist you in discovering a new meaning for the ABC's.