

Social

CONNECTION



Research has documented many physiological and mental health benefits of socialising and social support. Benefits include improved immune, cardiovascular, positive adjustment to chronic disease; decreased depression and anxiety; and effective buffering against the negative effects of stress.

Many people are more socially isolated than they'd like to be, despite perhaps having connections to acquaintances through social media. Researchers measure closeness of relationships in different ways, but many of these measures show "social poverty" or a lack of social support. It is possible to have a large group of acquaintances but still feel lonely, and many people do.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE Connected to others?

Here are some tips to help you make, keep and strengthen connections in your life:

Make a short list of friends and family members who are supportive and positive.

Also include a list of people you feel the need to stay in touch with regularly such as parents, a close friend or adult child who lives far away, or an ageing relative who lives alone.

Share what's on your mind honestly and openly.

Be direct with the kind of help you need, for example a sympathetic ear, help solving a problem, a fresh perspective, new ideas or a good laugh. Ask what other people think about your situation, and show them you value their opinion.

When you talk, also listen. Ask about someone else's day, or follow up on the topic of a previous conversation. Showing sincere interest in another person's life builds relationships and listening can often shed a new light on your own challenges.



Make a commitment to call, email or get together.

Try to reach out to make at least one emotional connection a day, but plan and schedule realistically. Consider using web-based ways of keeping in touch, like Skype or Facebook.

Make social plans. Create opportunities with fun things that both you and your friends will enjoy. Looking forward to special activities boosts our spirits and gives us energy.

Studies on social support show that having one or two close and supportive friends is at least as valuable to emotional health as having a large group of friendly acquaintances or more shallow friendships.

You may find that among people you hardly know, one or more can become trusted friends you can rely on—and support—in good times and bad.

If you don't already have people you can talk with regularly about what's on your mind, it's worth the effort to build connections for your emotional health.

