# Social Connection

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF Lifestyle Medicine

Our social connections and relationships have a big impact on our physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Studies show that the strongest factor in determining happiness and a long life is having close social bonds. Even brief positive interactions with others can improve things like blood pressure and heart rate. Here are some tips to help you build and maintain meaningful connections in your life.

## Forming New Social Connections




- Volunteer; helping others improves health, increases happiness and allows you to meet new people
  - Connect with a community resource center to find local options
  - Find online or community groups of those who share the same interests–meetup.com or Facebook groups are a great place to look
- Join a religious or spiritual group
- Help at a local animal shelter or adopt a pet to connect with other animal lovers
- Go to a local sports event, music performance, lecture or art display
- Help organize community events by joining a steering committee or board
- Attend community celebrations like parades or walks
- Take a course at your local library or community college
- Ask your employer for ways to increase social connections at work

TIP: Look for social opportunities that improve other areas of health such as activity groups or healthy cooking classes.

## Strengthen Social Connections

- Take more care to quickly connect with people you see a lot during the week
- When possible, stay positive while connecting with others
- Share new experiences
- Make and spend time with others
- Be there for those who need you
- Be flexible, supportive and excited about what others are doing in their lives

### Social Media and Depression

While technology can improve social connectedness in some cases, research finds that those who use social media the most are at a higher risk for depression. Be mindful of how you use technology to support social connections in your life.

## Social Connection Goals

Setting goals is a great way to increase your sense of connection. It's often easier to achieve positive goals. An example of a positive social connection goal is, "I will increase my feeling of social connectedness by joining a group fitness class that meets for an hour, three nights of the week."

**Specific** - What would you like to increase/change?

**Measurable** - How much or how many will you increase or change?

**Achievable** - Will you be inspired or overwhelmed by this goal?

**Realistic** - Can you visualize success? (think about improvement over perfection)

**Time-bound** - How often or for how long will you make this change?

© 2024 American College of Lifestyle Medicine. This material is not a substitute for professional medical advice.