

What is the importance of social connection?

Social connection is a fundamental human need, as essential to survival as food, water, and shelter. The lack of social connection poses a significant risk for individual health and longevity.¹

Poor or insufficient social connection is associated with:

- Increased risk of heart disease, stroke,² hypertension,^{3,4} diabetes,^{5,6,7} anxiety, depression,⁸ and dementia.^{9,10}
- Increased susceptibility to viruses and respiratory illness.¹¹
- Lower academic achievement^{12,13} and worse performance at work.^{14,15,16}

Increasing social connection can be a proactive approach to living a fulfilled and happy life. It can enhance life satisfaction, educational attainment, and performance in the workplace. It can also contribute to more deeply connected communities that are healthier, safer, and more prosperous.

What can I do to increase my level of social connection and improve my well-being?

1. **Invest time in nurturing your relationships** through consistent, frequent, and high-quality engagement with others.
2. **Participate in social and community groups** such as fitness, religious, hobby, professional, and community service organizations to foster a sense of belonging, meaning, and purpose.
3. **Seek out opportunities to serve and support others**, either by helping your family, coworkers, friends, or strangers in your community, or by participating in community service.
4. **Actively engage with people of different backgrounds and experiences** to expand your understanding of and relationships with others.
5. **Be responsive, supportive, and practice gratitude**^{17,18} as these behaviors can strengthen our social bonds and improve our relationship satisfaction.
6. **Reduce practices that lead to feelings of disconnection from others** such as the harmful and excessive use of social media and spending time in unhealthy relationships.
7. **Seek help during times of struggle** by reaching out to a family member, friend, counselor, health care provider, or the [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#).
8. **Be open with your health care provider** about significant social changes in your life. This may help them understand potential health impacts and guide them to provide recommendations to mitigate health risks.

1. [Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2023.](#)

2. [Valtorta et al., 2016.](#)

3. [Yang et al., 2016.](#)

4. [Harding et al., 2022.](#)

5. [de Wit et al., 2020.](#)

6. [Brinkhues et al., 2017.](#)

7. [Brinkhues et al., 2018.](#)

8. [Mann et al., 2022.](#)

9. [Penninkilampi et al., 2018.](#)

10. [Lazzari et al., 2021.](#)

11. [Cohen, 2020.](#)

12. [Guay et al., 1999.](#)

13. [Maher et al., 2013.](#)

14. [Bowers et al., 2022.](#)

15. [Ozcelik and Barsade, 2018.](#)

16. [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2022.](#)

17. [Canevello and Crocker, 2019.](#)

18. [Caputo, 2015.](#)

For more information and resources on the harms of social isolation and loneliness, and ways to increase your level of social connection, read the advisory at:

[surgeongeneral.gov/connection](https://www.surgeongeneral.gov/connection)



Office of the
U.S. Surgeon General