

# REASONS TO CONNECT

## RESEARCH ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL WELLNESS

Would you have guessed that one-third of adults age 50+ only communicate with someone outside of their home once a week or less? Take a moment to think about your social wellness and consider how you would answer these questions:

- How do you socialize and with whom? Think about housemates, friends, neighbors, spouse/partner, and others.
- Do your relationships provide you with emotional support?
- Do you have a friend you can call in the event of an emergency?
- Do you have friendships/connections that bring you laughter and joy?

Here are four research-based reasons to strengthen your social connections:

### 1. SOCIAL CONNECTION SUPPORTS BRAIN HEALTH.

When compared to those who are socially disconnected, older adults with strong social connections have lower rates of anxiety and depression and higher performance on cognitive tasks such as processing speed and memory.

### 2. A CONNECTED LIFE IS A HAPPY LIFE.

A Mather Institute study found that older adults with higher levels of social connection and community belonging reported greater happiness and life satisfaction.

If you need one more reason to connect more with others, keep in mind that social isolation has serious negative effects on health, including greater risk of heart disease and stroke.

### BOOST YOUR SOCIAL NETWORK

If you want to be more social, but are not sure where to start, set one or two reasonable goals for yourself, such as finding ways to interact with others twice a week. Then seek out opportunities. Easy options include:

### 3. CONNECTING WITH YOUR COMMUNITY IS GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH.

The feeling of neighborhood belonging is associated with beneficial psychological outcomes including life satisfaction, optimism, and purpose, as well as better overall health.

### 4. COMMON BONDS SUPPORT SOCIAL CONNECTIONS.

Older adults who identified as part of a fan base for a sports team experienced better perceived emotional support, which is associated with greater feelings of well-being.

- joining a class or club
- attending a house of worship
- signing up to volunteer for a cause that is close to your heart, such as helping at an animal shelter or food pantry. (Make sure your volunteer work has you interacting with other volunteers.)
- seeing what your public library branch has to offer in terms of book groups and other meetups

Keep in mind that you don't need to make new best friends—you are simply looking for people to add to your social circle.

## SOURCES

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