



Human Connection is Medicine

It may surprise you that one of the most powerful ways to care for our health and extend longevity requires **no equipment, prescription, or membership fee.**

Research continues to reinforce that human connection is medicine.² Connecting with others is not just a fun activity, but an essential pillar of our overall health and wellbeing.

“Social connection is widely acknowledged to be a fundamental human need linked to higher wellbeing, safety, resilience and prosperity, and to longer lifespan.”¹

Isolating during the COVID pandemic showed many of us how important and cherished our social connections are. But over the past two decades, in-person social engagement has decreased substantially among friends, family, and community members.³ This trend harms our health, increasing our risk for disease and even shortening our lifespans.³

We are more digitally connected than ever, but are those connections fulfilling?

Social connections include relationships and interactions with family, friends, colleagues, community members, and neighbors.³ We measure social connections not only by the number of people we connect with but also by how often we connect and, most importantly, the quality of those relationships.³

Our sense of social connection changes over time, so we may have periods of satisfactory connection and times when it feels lacking. Many factors shape our social connections, such as our health status, caregiving status, socioeconomic status, life stage, environmental factors, and more.³

Over-scheduled calendars, competing priorities, or our mental state and energy levels can keep us from engaging socially. But the power of social connections compels us to prioritize them in our daily habits.

Take time to reflect on your social connections, focusing on what you can control rather than what you cannot.

- *Who are the people I feel most connected to right now?*
- *In what ways am I encouraging meaningful connections, not just transactional conversations?*
- *Am I making an effort to create connection points, or only fitting it in when it is convenient?*
- *How do I show up for others?*

Consider some ways to strengthen and expand your social connections:^{2,3}

- *Practice gratitude and be supportive towards others*
- *Be present and avoid distractions during conversations and connection points like meals*
- *Set aside time each week to reach out to a friend or family member*
- *Participate in a community activity, hobby, or group once a month*
- *Aim to make your day-to-day interactions positive and friendly, whether you're with a neighbor or at the grocery store*

If you are struggling with loneliness or social disconnection, reach out for support to a friend, family member, counselor, health care provider, or the 988-crisis line. You are not alone.

This material is to be used for informational purposes only and is not intended to be exhaustive, nor should any of the materials be construed as professional or medical advice.

1. Holt-Lunstad, J. (2024). Social connection as a critical factor for mental and physical health: Evidence, trends, challenges, and future implications. *World Psychiatry, 23*(3), 312–332. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.21224>
2. Martino, J., Pegg, J., & Frates, E. P. (2015). The Connection Prescription: Using the Power of Social Interactions and the Deep Desire for Connectedness to Empower Health and Wellness. *American journal of lifestyle medicine, 11*(6), 466–475. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1559827615608788>
3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General. (2023). *Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's advisory on the healing effects of social connection and community*. <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>