

Remake Your Social Life

Healthy people tend to have strong social relationships. In fact, studies have shown that people with a supportive group of friends and family have a lower risk of chronic disease and stronger immune systems, which generally lead to a longer life.

So, how does having a healthy social life make us healthier? People who have healthy relationships show lower levels of a certain protein produced by your body that is a sign of inflammation. Inflammation is linked to many age-related conditions. In addition to less inflammation, healthy relationships can also reduce your blood pressure, heart rate and production of stress hormones.

Healthy vs. unhealthy relationships

If you have lots of friends and family, you are already on the right path to protecting your health. Healthy relationships are those you count on to be there for you. They help you feel good about yourself and your life. If being around certain friends or family members makes you tense, annoyed, or just uncomfortable, they may be causing you more harm than good.



Unhealthy relationships can actually increase stress instead of helping to relieve it. Stressful relationships can also contribute to depression and actually harm your immune system.

Set boundaries

Be patient with people, but make sure you set clear boundaries. If someone is bossing you around, firmly but gently ask them to stop. If engaging in gossip isn't your cup of tea, try to change the conversation to something you both enjoy talking about. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect.

Relationships at work

Unfortunately, our relationships at work can be tricky. Sometimes our bosses are, well, "bossy." Instead of asking you to work on specific projects, they can come across as demanding. Try not to take this personally; sometimes it's just their personality or management style and has nothing to do with you. Always treat bosses and coworkers with respect. Remember, you're part of a team and every member of the team is important.

Where did my friends go?

Friends can grow apart. As we get older and have more responsibilities such as working, raising kids and caring for older parents, we have less time to spend with our friends. Careers may have us moving to different cities, states or even countries. Interests that once bonded us to others can change as we get older.



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Making more friends

It doesn't have to be hard to make friends. Here is a list of ideas to get you started:

- Take a college or community education class
- Attend community events
- Volunteer
- Get in touch with an old friend
- Accept invitations to social gatherings

Nurture your relationships

It takes time to build new friendships. And it takes a little work, too.

- Take an interest in what's going on in your friends' lives.
- Don't share your friends' personal stories or thoughts with others.
- Be supportive and understanding.
- Don't give advice unless your friends ask for it.
- Share thoughts and experiences so your friends can get to know you.
- Always follow through on promises. If you can't keep an appointment you've made, call them to let them know.

Even with a crazy schedule, you can carve out half an hour to meet for tea or go for a walk. Go on a road trip with one or two friends. Start a book club. Take turns having dinner at each other's home once a week or once a month. Play sports together. There are many other options; be creative and have fun!



Family

Sometimes we take family members, especially ones who live nearby, for granted. Even our relationships with family need TLC. Here are some ideas to strengthen these important ties:

- Schedule a monthly dinner and a movie night.
- Set a tennis or golf date.
- Meet for coffee and just catch up.
- Share the responsibility and work for holiday meals.
- Use the phone instead of social messaging.
- Work on a project together, like a family heritage scrapbook. This can be a physical album or an online blog.

Facebook friends vs. real-life friends

Social media is a great way to share thoughts and pictures with all your friends and family with the push of a button. But are all your “friends” actually friends? A study done by Oxford University showed that we typically have five close friends and 12 to 15 friends. The reason for the limited number is simple. Relationships take work and there are only so many hours in the day.

Summary

Having good friends is important. Not just for your health, but to add some fun to your life. Good friends take time to make and keep, but they are worth it. Make sure to spend time face to face with the people who matter to you.

Sources:

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