

Social Connections

Factsheet



Social Connections

About Social Connections

We all feel we know how to take good care of ourselves: eat a healthy diet, get enough sleep and plenty of exercise, but having social connections is just as critical to your overall wellbeing.

Human beings are fundamentally social creatures and for a very good reason. If we look back into history, humans have hunted, travelled and thrived in social groups. When a human became separated from their tribe, this was often at the detriment to their existence.

The benefits of feeling socially connected...



Strengthens your immune system



Lower rates of depression and anxiety



Lowers the risk of mental decline as we age



You become more trusting and cooperative



Higher self-esteem and empathy



Better Sleep



Increases longevity



More productive

Social connections create a positive feedback loop and improve mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.

The world is increasingly becoming more isolating so therefore it's more important than ever to feel socially connected.

For many of us, we have too much to do and not enough time, consequently we may end up feeling stressed out. Our social networks start to get smaller as our lives get busier, leaving barely enough time for ourselves and even less time to connect with friends and family.

The dangers of having low social connections:



Negative impact on your overall health



More susceptible to anxiety and depression



Recovery from illness is slower



Anti-social behaviour and violence



Suicide

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The facts on loneliness:

- ▶ According to a global survey, 33% of adults experience feelings of loneliness worldwide
- ▶ Levels of loneliness in the UK have increased by 7.2% (about 3.2 million adults) since spring 2020
- ▶ Almost 5 million older people say that the television is their main form of company
- ▶ In December 2020, the government announced a £7 million fund to tackle loneliness

Source: [statista.com](https://www.statista.com), [ons.gov.uk](https://www.ons.gov.uk), assets.publishing.service.gov.uk, [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

Help remove the stigma of loneliness. Check in on people you know are alone.

If you're struggling, you're not alone

The coronavirus outbreak has made it harder to spend time with others. Relationships and family connections might have changed, and it can feel more difficult to see people. If you're feeling lonely, use these tips to help.

- Create a regular routine to check on others - it'll make it easier to reach out when you feel lonely
- Talk to someone you trust about how you feel
- Do more things you enjoy
- Volunteer
- Support, share and give acts of kindness to others
- Join an online community and talk to others about how you feel. Try **Side by Side** or **SANE Support Forum**

At the heart of our happiness, is the connections we have with others.

The most important thing for our wellbeing is having a supportive, secure and close network of relationships with others.

This could be with our partners, families, friends, work colleagues or even the wider community; all of which will contribute to our overall happiness and provides us with many opportunities.



Being able to experience activities together



The opportunity to provide support and receive support too



Enjoy positive emotions together, such as fun and laughter



Having someone who you can talk to openly and who understands you



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Reconnecting with family and friends

One of the hardest parts about the coronavirus pandemic was being unable to physically see friends and loved ones. Now that restrictions have lifted, invest some time into rebuilding relationships and enjoy reuniting with people special to you.

- **Reconnect with the right people.** Relationships can energise or drain you. Focus on the quality rather than quantity of your connections
- **Make the first move** and reach out. Be honest about how you feel and explain you're feeling unhappy that you haven't been in contact
- **Be open** about your personal preferences such as mask-wearing, vaccinations and hugs post-coronavirus
- **Reconnect at your own pace.** Everyone's different. Pushing yourself too quickly or too slowly may cause stress
- **Practice listening well.** Maintain eye contact and stay present
- **As you get used to socialising again,** make the transition easier and arrange meet ups outside rather than inside
- **Prepare** a few conversation starters to avoid awkward or uncomfortable moments
- **Give it time.** Connections might not be how they were straight away. Be consistent and patient
- **Commit** to a regular club or class. You'll make new friends as well as regularly seeing old ones

Some people will continue to struggle with change and feel overwhelmed. Learning to cope with stress in a healthy way will make you become more resilient.



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