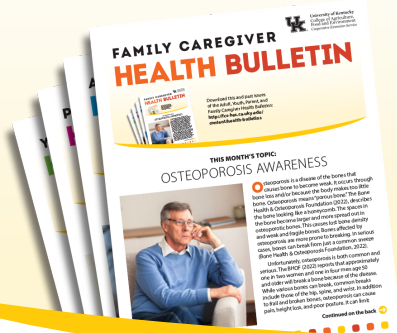




University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service

FAMILY CAREGIVER HEALTH BULLETIN



JULY 2023

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

THE POWER OF CONNECTION IMPROVES HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Social connections enhance health and overall well-being. Yet, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 1 in 3 adults, age 45 and older feel lonely. Loneliness and social isolation increase the risk of dementia, stroke, and heart disease. Research has even demonstrated that a lack of social connection can be just as bad as smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity.

According to the CDC, social connectedness means that you feel like “you belong and have the support and care you need, as well as the number, quality, and diversity of relationships you want.” Socially connected people sleep better, experience less stress, live longer, maintain

Continued on the next page →

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Supportive relationships and meaningful connections can positively affect mental, emotional, and social well-being.

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better health habits, experience better overall health, feel a greater sense of belonging and quality of life.

To be more socially connected consider this list of behavior changes:

- Set aside time each week for connecting with a friend or family member.
- Join a club or take a class to meet new people.
- Change socially isolating or disconnecting behaviors.
- Talk to a health-care provider about mental health, especially if you feel stressed, lonely, or depressed.
- Spend time with people who are important to you.
- Prioritize, develop, and maintain friendships and other meaningful relationships.

The Mayo Clinic reinforces the importance of friendships on overall health and well-being. Friends can increase your sense of belonging and purpose. They boost happiness, make you laugh, and can reduce stress. Friendships can enhance

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self-confidence and self-worth. Friends are there for you during the highs and lows of life events and transitions, including loss and illness. As we get older, meeting new friends can be challenging. Do not be afraid to reach out to people you enjoy talking to at events or gatherings you attend. Introduce yourself to your neighbors. Reach out to old friends you have not seen for some time. Stay in touch with people whose

company you enjoy. Take the initiative to reach out versus waiting for someone to contact you.

To find people with whom you may connect, the Mayo Clinic suggests the following social activities:



- Volunteering
- Finding new interests
- Joining a club, faith-based community, or online chat group
- Walking in a public park or around your neighborhood
- Attending community events
- Extending and accepting invitations
- Maintaining a positive attitude and open mind

When connecting with people in meaningful ways, it is important to be kind, trustworthy, and respectful. People value a relationship in which you build reciprocal intimacy through listening, empathy, openness, and availability. Social connections take time and effort, but supportive relationships and meaningful connections can positively affect mental, emotional, and social well-being.

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- CDC. (2023). The Power of Connection: How it Can Improve Our Health. Retrieved May 1, 2023 from <https://www.cdc.gov/emotional-wellbeing/features/power-of-connection.htm>
- Mayo Clinic (2022). Friendships: Enrich your life and improve your health. Retried May 1, 2023 from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/friendships/art-20044860>

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