

ENRICH YOUR LIFE WITH SOCIAL CONNECTION

Social connection is a vital part of life. But loneliness is more widespread than other major health issues in the U.S. today. Social connection is a powerful way to make our minds and bodies healthier.



Fast fact

Lack of social connection can increase the risk of premature death as much as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.

The information in this document is general advice. It does not replace medical or mental health care services. It is not a substitute for medical treatment, and it may not fit every situation.

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CREATING A HEALTHIER KENTUCKY

At UK HealthCare, we're leading the way to help all Kentuckians live their healthiest lives.

What you can do

- **Understand the power of social connection.** Social connection can impact your relationships, health and well-being.
- **Invest time and nurture your relationships** by regularly spending time with others and making that time count. Try to reach out to a friend or family member every day.
- **Focus during conversations.** When you talk with someone, try not to get distracted. For example, don't check your phone.
- **Look for ways to serve and support others.** Be ready to offer a helping hand to family, co-workers, friends or strangers. Also, don't forget to do things that help your community.
- **Be kind and thankful.** Help and support others, and say thank you. When we do these things, other people will notice and be kind back. This will strengthen your relationships.
- **Try to meet different kinds of people.** Talk and spend time with folks from different backgrounds. This will help you understand them better and make it easier to make new friends in the future.
- **Join social and community groups.** Take part in social communities, such as fitness clubs, religious groups, hobby or professional meet-ups, and community service organizations. This can give you a sense of belonging, meaning and purpose.
- **Reduce things that lead to disconnecting from others.** These include too much time in front of screens and on social media and unhealthy relationships. Look for ways to spend more time face-to-face with others.
- **Seek help when needed.** If you feel lonely or isolated, reach out to a family member, friend, counselor, health care provider, or the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.
- **Be open with your health care provider.** Don't be afraid to talk about major changes in your life. This can help them understand how these changes may affect your well-being so that they offer advice to reduce health risks.
- **Reflect on the core values of connection.** When you think about the time you spend with others, ask yourself these key questions: How could kindness change this situation? What would it look like to treat others with respect? How can I be of service? How can I reflect my concern for and commitment to others?

5 actions for 5 days

The U.S. Surgeon General suggests taking the "5-for-5 Connection Challenge" as a way to build and strengthen your relationships.

Step 1: Commit to connect. Pick 5 actions and 5 days in a row to connect with people in your life.

Step 2: Connect each day for 5 days. Each day, take 1 simple action of your choice to express gratitude, offer support or ask for help.

Step 3: Reflect and share. Take a moment. How did connecting make you feel?