



Connection & Mental Health

PRESENTED BY

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GBS Director, Behavioral Health Consulting



Effects of Social Connection

- Who here has experienced the positive impact of connecting with others?
- Have you ever experienced the health benefits of social connectedness?
- Consider how your physical and mental health might be influenced by your community interactions.
- Imagine a world without any community connections. How would that feel?



RULE OF THE COW

***Mental Health
Looks Different
for Everyone***





CHANGE IN CONNECTION

Across the Years

- › Survival
- › Protection
- › Shared Food
- › Cared for the sick
- › Separated = Danger
- › Instinct for tribe





CONNECTION & MENTAL HEALTH

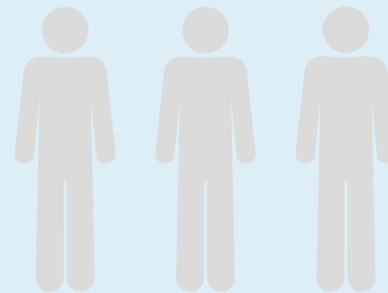
Today

How many confidants do you have?



3 Confidants

Average Several Decades Ago



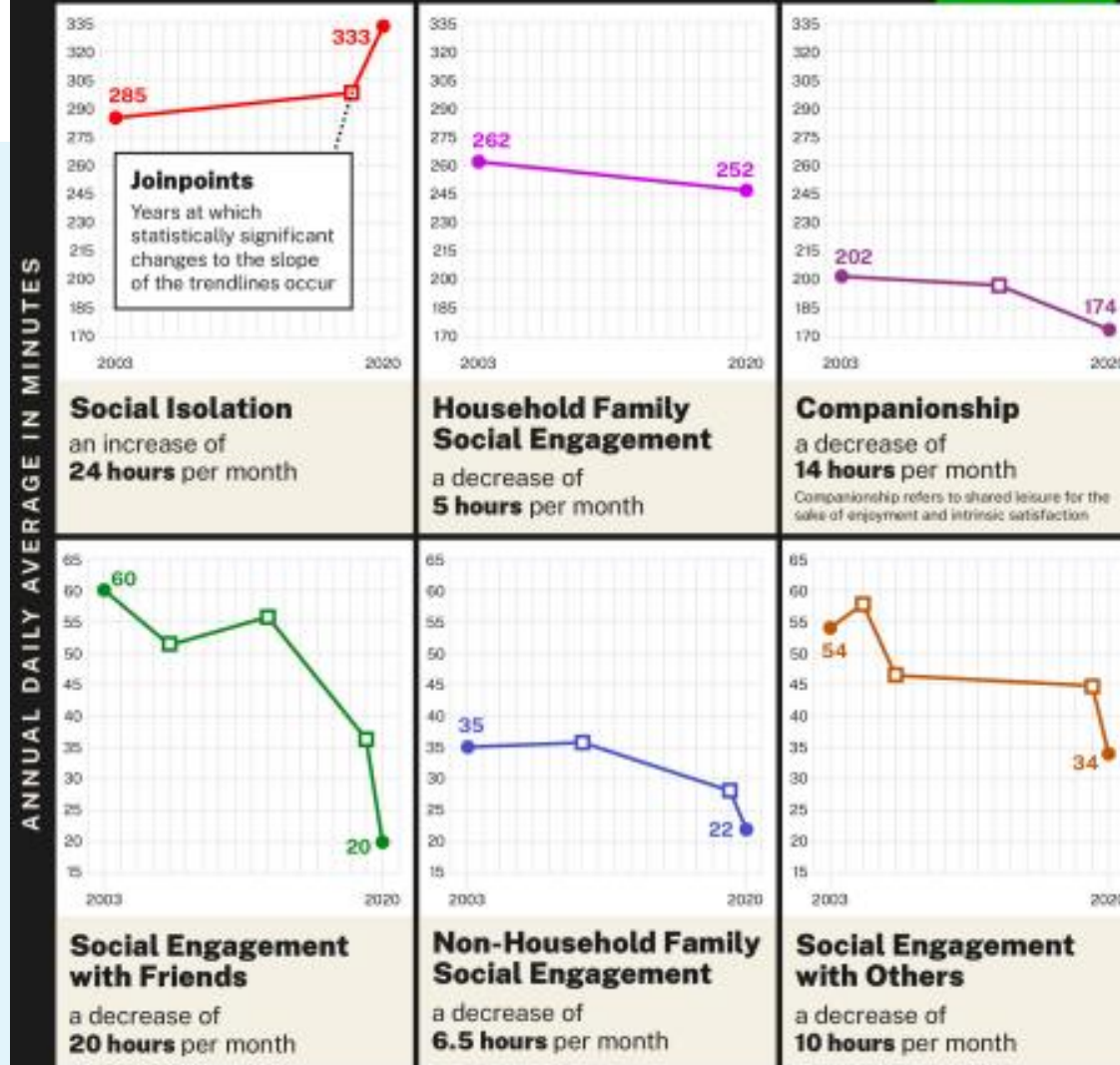
0 Confidants

Average Today

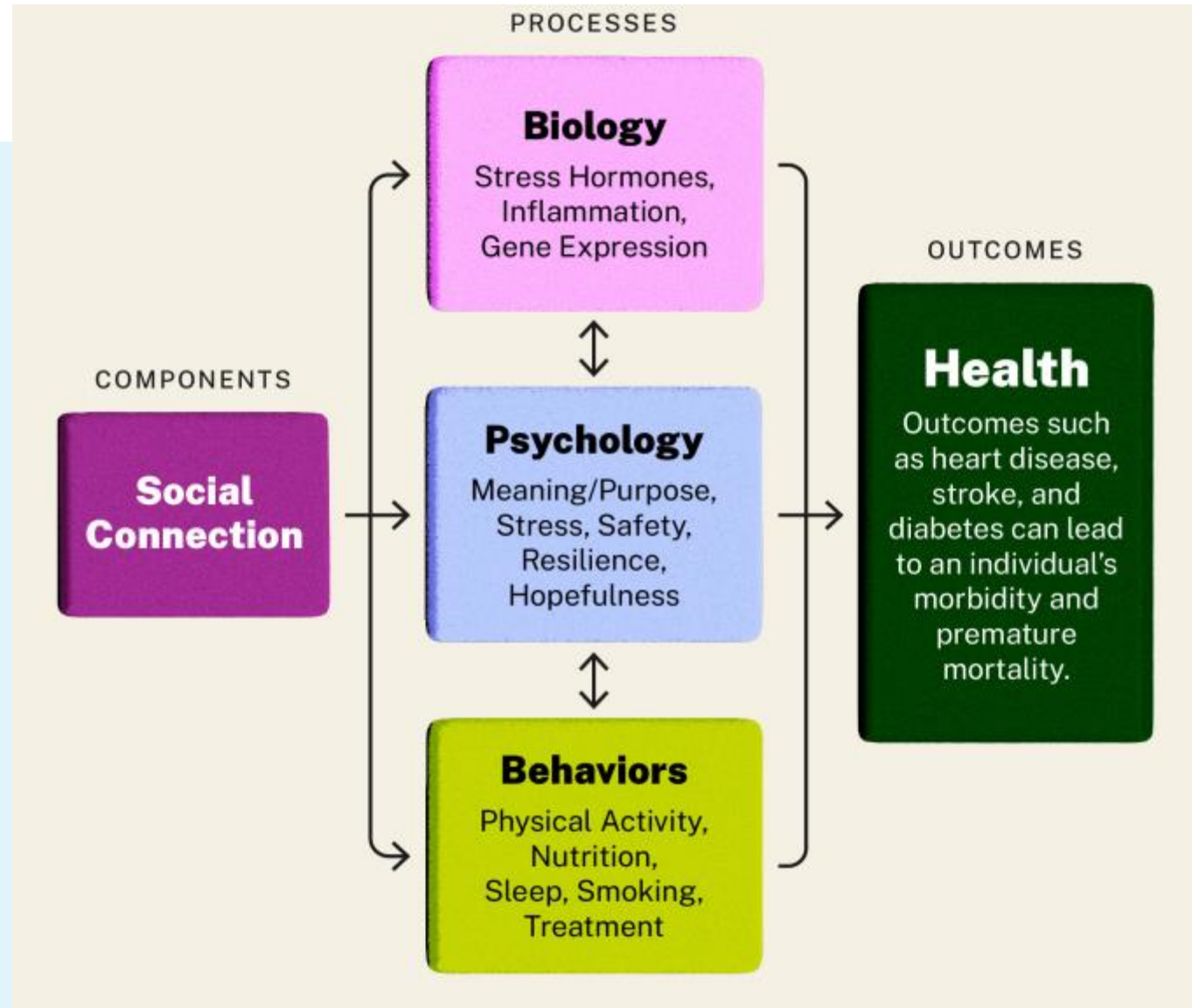


National Trends for Social Connection

From 2003 to 2020, time spent alone increased, while time spent on in-person social engagement decreased.



Effects of Social Connection



Effects of Social Connection



“Medicine and technology may fail us at times, but human connection grounded in love and compassion always heals.”

- U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy

Lack of positive social connection:

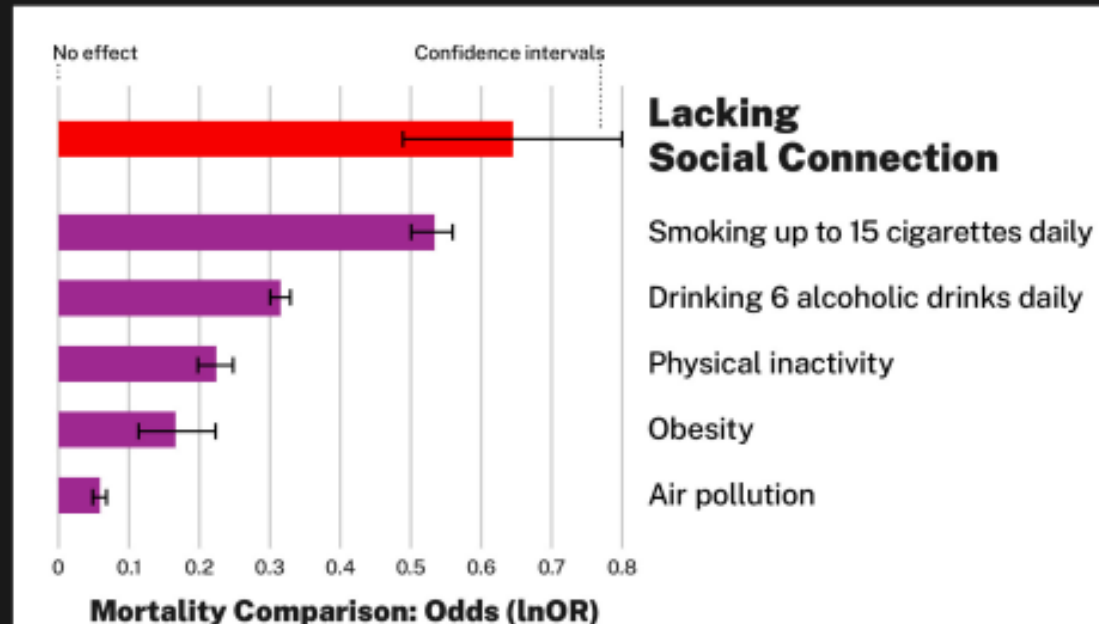
- › 29 percent higher risk of heart disease
- › 32 percent higher risk of stroke
- › 50 percent increased risk of dementia.
- › Lack of good social connections increases the risk of premature death by an astounding 60 percent

Effects of Social Connection



The mortality impact of being socially disconnected is similar to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day

**Lacking social connection
is as dangerous as smoking
up to 15 cigarettes a day.**



By the Numbers

Every 15 Minutes

1 person dies by suicide

Every 26 Seconds

There is a suicide attempt

Untreated depression and substance abuse increase the risk of suicide.

20% of the American Workforce

Experiences a mental illness at some point during their working life

“Social isolation is arguably the strongest and most reliable predictor of suicidal ideation, attempts, and lethal suicidal behavior among samples varying in age, nationality, and clinical severity.” - 2010 Study, “The Interpersonal Theory of Suicide”



PHYSICAL IMPLICATIONS

Loneliness Case Study

CONDUCTED BY

Dr. Lisa Berkman

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

*Thomas D. Cabot Professor of Public Policy and of
Epidemiology, Center for Population Studies*

OVERVIEW

Followed both isolated & connected people over a 9-year period.

FINDINGS

- › 2-3x more likely to die
- › Everything became more fatal: cancer, heart disease, respiratory problems



PHYSICAL IMPLICATIONS

Loneliness & Stress Case Study

CONDUCTED BY

The University of Chicago

Neuroscience Institute

OVERVIEW

- › How are loneliness and stress are connected?
- › Monitored 100 strangers going about everyday life.
- › **Beeper:** how lonely or connected you felt, heartrate, and spit into a tube

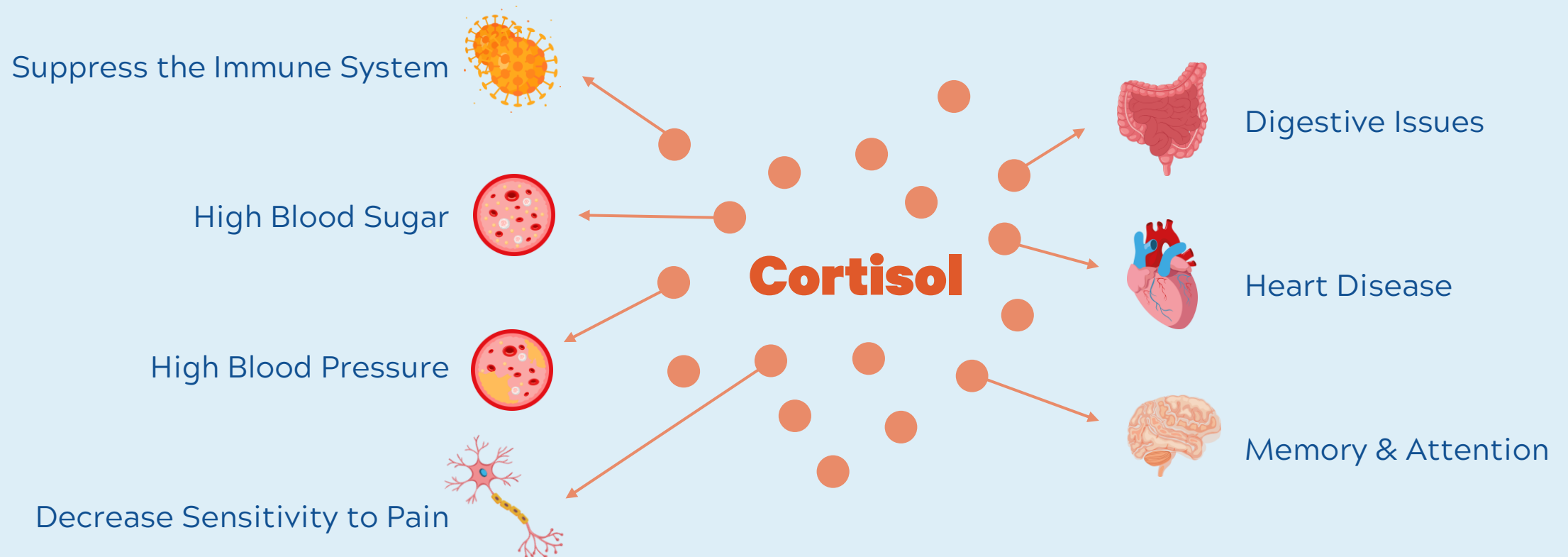
FINDINGS

Cortisol levels soared. Same as experiencing a physical attack.



PHYSICAL IMPLICATIONS

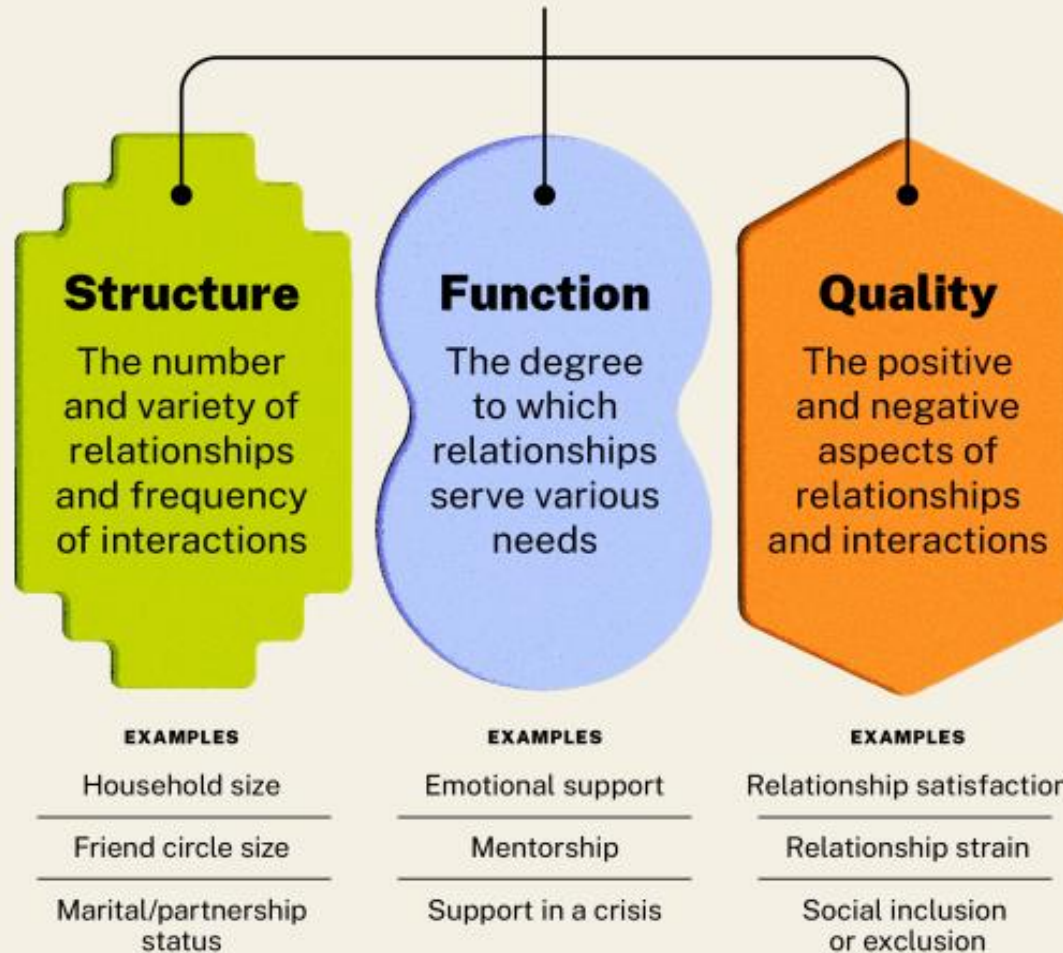
Loneliness





The Three Vital Components of Social Connection

The extent to which an individual is socially connected depends on multiple factors, including:





COMMUNITY

Effects of Social Connection

- › Lower Levels of Anxiety & Depression
- › Blood pressure and heart rate improve even with short positive social interactions
- › Gives us higher self-esteem, greater empathy for others and makes us more trusting and cooperative
- › Making new connections keeps the brain young and alert
- › Increase longevity - people who stay socially active have longer life spans
- › Strengthens your immune system (genes impacted by loneliness also code for immune function and inflammation)



CONNECTION &
MENTAL HEALTH

One thing...





THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CARE

Social Media

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AT A GLANCE

6 Years 8 Months

Average Individual Social Media
Consumption in a Lifetime

2 Hours 41 Minutes

Average Time Spent on Social
Media by Internet Users in 2020

**4.5
Hours Per Day**

Average Social Media
Consumption by Gen Zers

**3.8
Hours Per Day**

Average Social Media
Consumption by Millennials

**2.08
Hours Per Day**

Average Social Media
Consumption by Americans

Moderate Use



Set Time Limits

One effective way to moderate social media use is to set time limits for how long you spend on these platforms each day. Use apps such as the "Screen Time" feature on iPhones and Androids.

Take a Break

As the University of California, Irvine study mentioned taking a break from social media for a period can have positive effects on mental health and well-being. Consider taking a day or week-long break from social media occasionally.

Use Social Media Mindfully

Rather than mindlessly scrolling through your feeds, try to use social media more intentionally and mindfully. For example, set specific goals for your social media use, such as connecting with friends or finding new sources of inspiration.

Turn Off Notifications

Constant notifications can be a major source of distraction and can make it difficult to disconnect from social media.

Engage in Other Activities

Engage in other activities that you enjoy, such as reading, exercising, or spending time with loved ones.



Effects of Social Connection

- › **Make social connection** a strategic priority in the workplace
- › **Train, resource, and empower leaders** and managers to promote connection in the workplace and implement programs that foster connection.
- › **Create practices and a workplace culture** that allow people to connect to one another as whole people
- › **Put in place policies that protect workers' ability to nurture** their relationships outside work including respecting boundaries between work and non-work time, supporting caregiving responsibilities, and creating a culture of norms and practices that support these policies

Personal



Effects of Social Connection

- › **Understand the power of social connection** and the consequences of social disconnection by learning how the vital components can impact your relationships, health, and well-being.
- › **Invest time in nurturing your relationships** through consistent, frequent, and high-quality engagement with others. Take time each day to reach out to a friend or family member.
- › **Minimize distraction during conversation** to increase the quality of the time you spend with others. For instance, don't check your phone during meals with friends, important conversations, and family time.
- › **Seek out opportunities to serve and support others**, either by helping your family, co-workers, friends, or strangers in your community or by participating in community service



Effects of Social Connection

- › **Participate in social and community groups** such as fitness, religious, hobby, professional, and community service organizations to foster a sense of belonging, meaning, and purpose.
- › **Reduce practices that lead to feelings of disconnection from others.** These include harmful and excessive social media use, time spent in unhealthy relationships, and disproportionate time in front of screens instead of people.
- › **Seek help during times of struggle with loneliness or isolation** by reaching out to a family member, friend, counselor, health care provider, or the 988 crisis line.
- › **Be responsive, supportive, and practice gratitude.** As we practice these behaviors, others are more likely to reciprocate, strengthening our social bonds, improving relationship satisfaction, and building social capital.



Effects of Social Connection

Oxytocin: The Cuddle Hormone

Overview

- › Part of the stress response. Driving us to be with our community
- › This drives us to reach out to be supported or provide support
- › Heart protective: regenerative of heart cells, blood vessels relax. Natural anti-inflammatory.
- › Recover faster from stress

Study

Those who cared for others had no increased risk of mortality.

Volunteer



Effects of Social Connection

Improves physical and mental health.

Volunteering reduces stress and increases positive, relaxed feelings by releasing dopamine.

Volunteers have lower mortality rates – even when controlling for age, gender, and physical health.

Provides a sense of purpose

Especially when giving their time and talent in the areas they find meaningful

Nurture new and existing relationships.

Connect to your community and make it a better place.

Animals have been shown to improve mood and reduce stress and anxiety.



Effects of Social Connection

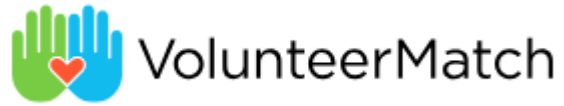


How to find the right volunteer opportunity

- Would you like to work with adults, children, animals, or remotely from home?
- Do you prefer to work alone or as part of a team?
- Are you better behind the scenes or do you prefer to take a more visible role?
- How much time are you willing to commit?
- What skills can you bring to a volunteer job?
- What causes are important to you?

Where to find volunteer opportunities

- Community theaters, museums, and monuments.
- Libraries or senior centers.
- Service organizations such as Lions Clubs or Rotary Clubs.
- Local animal shelters, rescue organizations, or wildlife centers.
- Youth organizations, sports teams, and after-school programs.
- Historical restorations, national parks, and conservation organizations.
- Places of worship such as churches or synagogues



When she was eight years old, after dinner, her family would sit together to watch a television show. Usually, it was a Western featuring Roy Rogers, who was her father's favorite.



*Thank you for
joining me today!*

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