

## Take action to increase social connections

- ✓ **Do an act of kindness** for a friend or stranger.
- ✓ **Reach out to someone** you have lost contact with or to an acquaintance you would like to get to know better.
- ✓ **Attend events and classes**, perhaps through community education, gyms, or places of worship.
- ✓ **Find a Meetup** (meetup.com) or similar website that lists activities that interest you in your community.
- ✓ **Volunteer.** Find an organization or cause that interests you.
- ✓ **Decrease time on social media.** People often post the very best moments in their lives. You can feel lonelier when comparing yourself to what you see on social media.
- ✓ **Get a pet.** They are good company and can help keep you active.
- ✓ **Consider therapy** to help challenge your negative thoughts and change the behaviors that keep you isolated.



### MY GOAL FOR THIS WEEK

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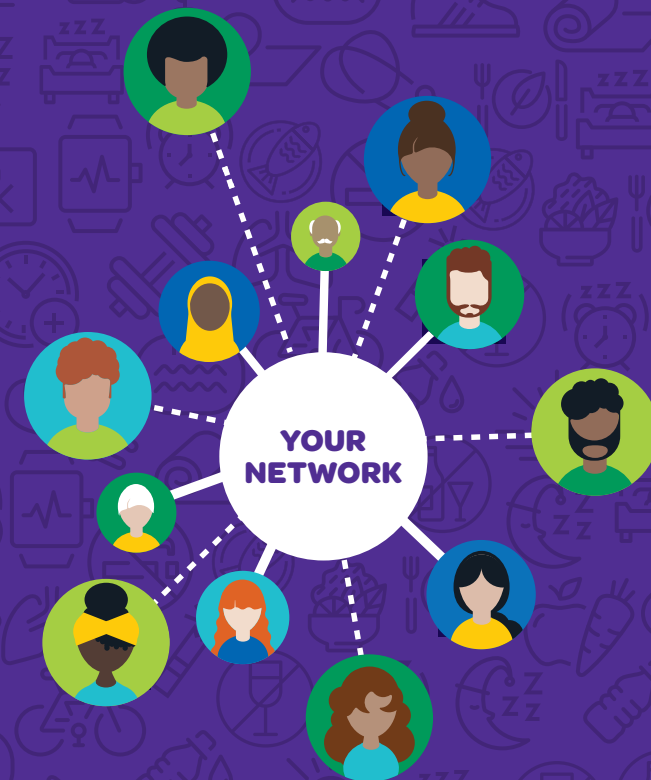
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Changing these habits can be hard, but creating stronger social connections can improve your quality of life and physical wellbeing!



# Increasing Social Connections



[www.ChangethatMatters.UMN.edu](http://www.ChangethatMatters.UMN.edu)

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**CHANGE** that *MATTERS*

*Promoting Healthy Behaviors*

# My plan to increase my social connections

Close relationships are a lot like food and water. We need them to survive. Relationships give life meaning.

However, sometimes we build **“walls”** around ourselves. Maybe we’ve been hurt in a relationship, or someone special died, or we fear rejection if we reach out. Although the wall protects us from being hurt, it can leave us feeling isolated, lonely and sad.

Loneliness also impacts our health. In fact, being socially isolated has the same effect on health as smoking 15 cigarettes per day!

On the other hand, having more meaningful social connections is related to:

- Longer life
- Better mood and less anxiety
- Lower blood pressure
- Improved physical health



Although some people focus on the social media idea of “friends,” that’s different from true friendship. What really matters is having a small number of people you can trust and feel close to — even one or two is often enough! **Who are you close to now?**

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## Consider the **“bricks”** in my wall that keep me isolated.

Think about your bricks and see IF and HOW you can take them down and allow yourself to reconnect with people. Some bricks may have been there a long time and may seem cemented in place by strong emotions (e.g., depression, anxiety, worthlessness). What bricks are keeping you stuck, isolated, or alone? Identifying your bricks is a big step toward change.

