

# SOCIAL CONNECTION AND MENTAL HEALTH

## BENEFITS

- Quality social connection, social support and a sense of belonging are correlated with:
  - Happiness
  - Decreased sense of loneliness and isolation
  - Increased sense of meaningfulness in life
  - Increased resilience
- Experiencing a sense of belonging is associated with satisfaction and meaning in life
- Even short term positive interactions between people can improve your thinking in terms of short term memory and ability to perform mental tasks, as well as resilience and recovering from stressful events
- The relationship between high quality connections and happiness is reciprocal: having high quality connections leads us to be happier, and if we're happier, we have higher quality connections

## TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

- Find opportunities for moment to moment positive interactions with others; even small steps can help break the "loneliness cycle"
  - Actively search out groups and organizations related to what you're looking for in relationships and interactions with others. Ex: support around a certain issue/topic; hobbies, skills and interests
- Volunteer in the community
- Compliment someone or ask a casual question to make conversation (ex. with staff/someone in line at a grocery store or coffee shop)
- Find ways to grow and strengthen current relationships
- If you're busy, schedule time in your calendar for friends or find ways to combine time with friends with things that are already in your schedule (ex. exercise, shopping, events)
- Cultivate social skills and a sense of belonging by: being patient with yourself during big transitions including starting a new program or relocating to a new town; showing genuine interest in others' thoughts and feelings; thinking of ways to be a better listener
- Become more aware of people you would reach out to if you're struggling

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## FURTHER READING

### **Coping with Loneliness-Canadian Mental Health Association**

- <https://cmha.bc.ca/documents/coping-with-loneliness/>

### **Making Good Friends-HelpGuide.org**

- <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships-communication/making-good-friends.htm>

