

# SOCIAL CONNECTION

# LOVE MORE

## LOVE AND LONGEVITY



The research is clear. The number one factor linked to longevity is love. The Harvard Adult Development Study, which has followed hundreds of men for over eighty years, and now their children, has shown that it is relationships, more than any other factor, that is tied to happiness and wellbeing.

The Roseto study of an Italian immigrant community in Pennsylvania, showed the same impact of close social bonds, which reduced the rate of heart attacks despite the same levels of fat intake and cigarette smoking compared to a nearby town. Once this community became more assimilated to the dominant culture and those social connections disbanded, the rate of heart disease climbed.

## SURROUND YOURSELF WITH POSITIVE PEOPLE

Strong social support is linked with improved mood, likelihood of engaging in health promoting behaviors, and even improved markers of cellular longevity and immunity. Conversely, loneliness and isolation have the opposite effect, with the mortality impact being equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day, according to the 2023 US Surgeon General's Report on "Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation."



Hmm...

SO, WHAT CAN WE DO? RELATIONSHIPS ARE DIFFICULT AND OFTEN COMPLEX. FINDING TRUE FRIENDS IS MUCH HARDER THAN GETTING "LIKES" ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS.

## "MICRO-MOMENT" CONNECTIONS

Building strong connections can be challenging. However, important things often take effort. One could start with "micro-moments" of connection. According to Barbara Fredrickson, a researcher in positive psychology, seeking out at least three opportunities for positive connection with others daily, and reflecting on it each night, is associated with an increase in positive emotions and improved vagal tone (relaxation response).



This may involve a phone call or text to a friend or family member, really listening to a colleague at work and offering support, or intentionally building up a child or partner. Often, success with these smaller moments with life-affirming individuals, can give us the strength to tackle our more difficult relationships. The key is the investment of our time and intention.



## PLUG-IN TO YOUR COMMUNITY

If you are not well connected to your community, there are often resources that can help you meet like-minded individuals. For example, you can find groups with similar interests on meetup.com, volunteer at a charity, or seek out a faith-based organization.

If you find it difficult to connect, and it is impacting your daily function and wellbeing, consider reaching out to the providers at your **Partnership Health Center** to help you connect to treatment and resources.

