

FIVE OF THE BEST SOCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR SENIORS

Here are five of the best senior social activities that can help older people stay physically, mentally and emotionally healthy.

1. Walking

One of the most beneficial senior social activities is walking with friends. Not only do you get the chance to visit with other people your age, but you also can strengthen your body and improve your mental attitude. Often, seniors get together to walk in parks, their neighborhoods and other outdoor areas. When the weather isn't cooperating, you could always walk inside a department store or nearby mall. You can usually find walking groups advertised in a local newspaper.

2. Exercise classes

Participating in exercises classes helps not only in alleviating depression and boredom, but it can also be a way to strengthen your muscles, which is critical for older people. Moreover, exercise classes can improve cognitive abilities as you're forced to think about how to move your body. Besides providing classes for aerobics and stretching exercises, many gyms and senior centers also include yoga classes, which help to improve not only muscle strength but also flexibility and balance.

3. Swimming and water aerobics classes

Swimming and water aerobics are excellent ways to work out with other people. In fact, water exercises are more helpful than land exercises for those who suffer from arthritis as it doesn't put pressure on the joints. Why not sign up for a water aerobics class at a local community center or join a gym that has an indoor pool, so you can swim year throughout the year.

4. Dancing

There are several ways that dancing benefits older people. For example, it's one of the most social activities you can do because it usually involves a dance partner. What's more, dancing is good for your heart and joints. Furthermore, dancing makes you more mentally alert, which can lower the odds for developing dementia. Consider how this activity involves not only your body but also forces you to think, such as memorizing dance moves and steps. Even if you have diseases, such as asthma, cancer or Parkinson's disease, you could still probably dance. Just be sure to have a doctor's approval before doing any type of physical activity.

5. Board games

Board games are an ideal way to bond with friends and/or family. Look for board games that match your interests as well as your activity level. A common game that many seniors enjoy is Bingo, which can stimulate mental health. Another all-time favorite board game is Scrabble. Card games are also popular with seniors. You may even be able to find a local bridge club in Australia.

Other considerations

- If you love gardening, join a gardening club where you can socialize with others who also enjoy digging in the dirt. Besides learning more about growing plants, you could participate in outings with other gardeners and make some new friends.
- Volunteer work is another way to stay active and connected with other people, while helping others. Even more important, volunteering can give you a sense of purpose for your life.
- Support groups help seniors struggling with grief or other problems. By talking with others who share common issues, people learn how to deal with their feelings and don't feel so alone.
- If walking alone doesn't interest you, and you enjoy watching birds, perhaps, you could find some other seniors who are bird watchers.
- If you crochet or knit, consider joining a prayer shawl ministry that creates beautiful prayer shawls for people who are sick or grieving. Besides doing something for others, you can get the opportunity to socialize, pray together and learn new crochet and/or knitting stitches.