



VITAMIN

Vital health information in a minute

Strengthen your social connections

Building close and meaningful relationships takes some effort. It's important to keep trying, even if you have some setbacks along the way. Healthy relationships are key to living your best life. Research suggests that having strong social connections can give your health a boost. People who have social support from family and friends are often happier, have fewer health problems and live longer.¹

Think about the relationships in your life. Are your friends or family members drifting apart? Do you feel like your closest relationships are on autopilot? The start of a new year is a great time to reassess your relationships and focus on ways to deepen those connections. Here are some suggestions:

- 1. Be present.** Unplug from your phone and other distractions so you can be truly in the moment with someone. Giving your time and undivided attention shows you really care.
- 2. Listen with your heart.** Actively listen so you can hear and understand the other person's perspective. Being a good listener involves asking questions and reflecting on what you've heard.
- 3. Be authentic.** Share openly about your biggest worries and challenges. Doing so can help you find common ground and develop trust.
- 4. Embrace differences.** You're bound to have differences of opinion with others. Instead of letting differences drive a wedge, make a point to accept the differences and move on.
- 5. Show appreciation.** When life is busy, it's easy to overlook the everyday acts of kindness. Take a moment to express your gratitude to others.
- 6. Get together.** Don't wait until the next holiday party or reunion to get together. Make a plan next week or next month to connect socially.
- 7. Stay in touch.** Keep up with family and friends when you can't get together in person. Setting up a long-distance video chat or virtual game night can bring you closer together even when you're miles apart.

Source:

1. Harvard Health. "The health benefits of strong relationships." Available at https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/the-health-benefits-of-strong-relationships (last reviewed August 6, 2019).

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