

## **Steps to LivingWell**

People with a strong social network live an average of 22 percent longer than those without one. Why are social ties so beneficial? For one thing, having close friendships protects against depression, which is increasingly common as you get older. That, in turn, may motivate you to take better care of yourself. Having a network of people you can turn to in times of stress or anxiety can also give you support and practical help, ultimately minimizing stress.

Social connection keeps you physically active as well. Studies have found that older adults who were less social had a more rapid decline in motor function.

It's important for your well-being to have a diverse group of acquaintances, casual friends and close friends. Whether you're taking a class, volunteering, joining a social group or attending a lecture offered, there are countless opportunities to get involved and make new friends. Having a wide social network, and being open to new experiences can be helpful for deepening existing relationships, and the combination of social activity can ward off cognitive decline and boost energy levels.

Socializing and meeting new people; trying new activities, especially activities involving exercise, are a few of the most important aspects of beating the depression cycle. And of course, remember to laugh out loud as often as possible because, as we know, laughter is often the best medicine.

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