



## Tips for Maintaining Social Engagement

As seniors age, the lack of connection with others and a diminishing social life can cause an increase of depression as well as a multitude of other health problems. Depression and isolation in seniors can even to cause sickness, high blood pressure and an increased risk for early death. However, seniors who maintain an active and independent lifestyle gain benefits that boost their physical health, emotional well-being and their ability to remain independent for longer. In articles on socializing and engagement from [AARP](#)<sup>®</sup> and [LIVESTRONG.COM](#)<sup>®</sup>, it states that social interaction can affect seniors' psychological, physical and cognitive health in several ways.

- **Psychological Health.** Seniors who are engaged benefit from a sense of belonging and higher self-esteem levels. When seniors connect with those who are passionate about the same things they are, it forms lasting bonds and confidence. According to the LIVESTRONG.COM article, seniors who connect and regularly socialize are less likely to suffer from depression and anxiety. They are also more likely to get help if they are experiencing mental health problems, according to the article.
- **Physical Health.** Those who exercise and participate in group classes are less likely to develop health problems, such as osteoporosis, heart disease and cancer. Those who are socially isolated can benefit from these group exercise programs, as the opportunity to socialize promotes an active and healthier lifestyle. Because those who are isolated are more likely to skip meals as a result of eating alone, getting out and socializing can lead to sharing meals with new friends.
- **Cognitive Health.** According to AARP, social interaction can keep Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia away. In a quote from the article, said by Valerie Crooks, clinical trials administrative director at Southern California Kaiser Permanente Medical Group, "Whenever we have even the most basic exchange, we have to think about how to respond, and that stimulates the brain." It is shown that those with a large social group are less likely to develop dementia and are more likely to participate in physical activities, which can also cut the risk of dementia.

With all of these benefits, it is important to make social engagement just as much of a priority as anything else in order to live an independent lifestyle filled with happiness and connection, not isolation and depression. According to [Everyday Health](#)<sup>®</sup>, staying socially connected can be achieved through many different mediums. For ideas on how to benefit from social engagement, read on.

### Tips for Staying Socially Engaged & Independent for Longer

- **Join a club.** Think of some things that interest you or a loved one. If you or a loved one is an avid reader, find a book club to join. If gardening or woodworking are hobbies, find clubs for them. By getting together with those who share the same interests, seniors are likely to cultivate friendships.
- **Play word or mind games.** According to Everyday Health, by playing intellectually stimulating games with others, seniors can keep their minds active while remaining socially connected to others. Try playing games such as chess or checkers. Participate in a bridge club or poker.

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- **Volunteer or find a part time job.** If there are a limited number of clubs you would like to join, try volunteering for an organization that means something to you. If you love pets, volunteer at a shelter. If you care a lot about children's literacy, tutor children in reading. Giving back and keeping involved is a very important part of engagement.
- **Get involved at church.** If religion is an important part of who you are, get involved. Attend services, socials and bible studies. Make an effort to meet with church members to have lunch.
- **Visit friends and family often.** Maintaining your close personal relationships is one of the best things you can do to remain socially engaged, according to Everyday Health. Set times to do things with friends and family. Make a tradition out of Sunday brunch with your girlfriends. Play poker or golf with the guys. Make a ritual out of visiting friends and family as often as you can, and then continue to do so with new friends you make from the increased socializing you are doing.

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