



5.2.3 Social and relational wellness

“Life is mostly about relationships – about belonging and fitting in.” UK charity supporting those hurt by loneliness

All of the research participants spoke about the influence of relationships on their lives. The types and forms of relationship are diverse (e.g., family, friends, peers, colleagues, teammates); however, the quality of each influences your personal wellbeing and overall quality of life. Indeed, maintaining healthy, supportive social connections can be vital to your ability to function, as these quotes show:

.... the last two terms, I did very little [work] at the weekends because I'd been working every weekend the first term and... it was just getting to be not much fun... having the weekends free and doing things with friends or with my fiancé certainly improved throughout the year... I found that if I was refreshed and in a good mood... then that would translate to the atmosphere in the classroom, so... it helped to be rested and relaxed on Monday morning. (Nina)

I've got a really wonderful group of very, very close friends, and I've been very lucky that they've looked out for me... you know, I've been able to talk to them about career – because I came into this a lot later than they did... they did their undergraduates and went on and did doctorates in their thing, in tenured positions, whereas, you know, I was in my thirties by the time I started [mine]... they'd gone through this process before me, so I've kind of I suppose seen that I then could rely on their advice and experience. (Trudi)

Creating and maintaining your own social wellness

If you set yourself goals to create and maintain social connections, soon you are likely to have an abundance of 'social wellness,' – that is the ability to interact with people, form relationship and create a sense of belonging.

You might want to consider these suggestions if you want to review and enhance your social wellness.

- **Know your needs** – Identify what your needs are in order to maintain your social and relational wellness; this will help prevent you from feeling pressured to perform in an environment you don't enjoy or care about.
- **Reach out** – Offer connection and friendship to others so you can identify people who would like to form more meaningful relationships. When moving to a new location join groups or clubs around your interests or hobbies, carry out volunteer work, attend local events and talk to your new neighbours.
- **Choose your relationships** – Cultivate relationships that are nurturing and supportive; whenever possible avoid those that create strains on your emotions and affect your ability to function socially.



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- **Learn to build and stay in healthy relationships** – Develop relationships with people you care about and who care about you and your well-being. Build mutual trust and compassion so you feel safe and appreciated.
- **Don't give in to the pressure to conform** – Seeking to co-operate with the society in which you live does not necessarily mean changing yourself or pretending to be a person you are not. Acknowledging your uniqueness may even help you to create some new relationships.
- **Learn to communicate effectively** – Being able to communicate appropriately is a vital component of social wellness, enabling you to maintain existing relationships and initiate new ones.

Social Wellness Challenge Ideas

- Become active in a club, group, or organization.
- Call or write to far-away friends or family.
- Cultivate new friendships outside of your family.
- Turn off the TV/computer and interact with people.
- Maintain regular contact with a lonely person.
- Choose your own healthy habit to develop social wellness.

See also 'Family' and 'Friends'

Other useful resources

[Mayo Clinic <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/friendships/art-20044860>](http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/friendships/art-20044860): Friendships enrich your life and improve your health

[Taking charge of your health and wellbeing \(University of Minnesota\) <http://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/wellbeing/relationships>](http://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/wellbeing/relationships): Relationships

Succeed Socially <http://www.succeedsocially.com>: Social skills and getting past social awkwardness



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