



Connecting with Others



“Connecting” may take many forms (face-to-face vs. virtual), with a range of “others” (family, friends, co-workers, pets) (1). The nature and depth of the relationship may vary; the quality and quantity of the connection can predict health and well-being (2).

*Inspired by true stories...Research shows that connecting with others is **GOOD** for you!*

#onlinepeerconnections: Connecting online with others who are suffering from the same illness as me, and receiving support from other commenters, has made me feel less lonely and more “normal” - Anonymous (3)

#connectionsavelives: senior centres can save lives because you can interact with others, make new friends, especially when you’ve just lost a loved one - Anonymous

What About You?

What are you currently doing?

What have you done in the past few years?

How do you feel about it? (Please circle)



Goal Setting

In the next _____ months/year, I would like to:

To do this, I will need to:

Remember: What you do everyday matters to your health and well-being!





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Clinician Guide

When? This document can be used to empower clients to think beyond their own problems or limitations to identify strengths and talents that they could share with others.

Why? Research shows that loneliness and social isolation can significantly increase risk of early mortality (4). Not all connections are healthy, however, meaningful social integration and supportive relationships can lead to better physical and mental health and well-being, (5). Belonging, connectedness, and interdependence fostered through engaging in occupations is positively correlated with well-being (6).

How? The worksheet can be used with individuals or groups, to guide reflection on the importance of connecting with others. See below for questions to prompt reflection and goal setting for change.

What About You? - Reflection Questions

Are you currently doing anything to connect with others?

- Describe (who, what, where, when, why?)
- How satisfied are you with your current connections/relationships?
- Benefits? Challenges?

Were there any connections you made in the past few years that were meaningful to you?

- What has changed?
- Is there something from these past experiences that you would like to have in your life now?

Goal Setting Guide

What could you do differently in your current routine to better connect with others?

- How meaningful would this be for you? (7-point Likert scale low to high)
- How much time would you like to commit to this? (Engagement)
- How much choice/control do you have over making this change?
- Could it interfere with other things you want or need to do? (Balance)

What personal or external issues might get in the way of meeting your goal?



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References:

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2. Cohen, S. (2004). Social relationships and health. *American psychologist*, 59(8), 676.
3. Naslund, J. A., Grande, S. W., Aschbrenner, K. A., & Elwyn, G. (2014). Naturally occurring peer support through social media: the experiences of individuals with severe mental illness using YouTube. *PLOS one*, 9(10), e110171.
4. Holt-Lunstad, J., Smith, T. B., Baker, M., Harris, T., & Stephenson, D. (2015). Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for mortality: a meta-analytic review. *Perspectives on psychological science*, 10(2), 227-237.
5. Holt-Lunstad, J., Smith, T. B., & Layton, J. B. (2010). Social relationships and mortality risk: a meta-analytic review. *PLoS medicine*, 7(7), e1000316.
6. Suh, E. M., & Koo, J. (2008). Comparing subjective well-being across cultures and nations. *The science of subjective well-being*, 414-427.

Other suggested readings:

1. Merolli, M., Gray, K., & Martin-Sanchez, F. (2016). Patient participation in chronic pain management through social media: A clinical study. In *Studies in Health Technology and Informatics: Proceedings of the 13th International Congress in Nursing Informatics, 'Nursing Informatics 2016: eHealth for All: Every Level Collaboration-From Project to Realization', Geneva, Switzerland, 25-29 June 2016/Walter Sermeus, Paula M. Procter, Patrick Weber (eds.)* (Vol. 225, p. 577).
2. Morrow-Howell, N., Lee, Y. S., McCrary, S., & McBride, A. (2014). Volunteering as a pathway to productive and social engagement among older adults. *Health Education & Behavior*, 41(1_suppl), 84S-90S.