



# Building & maintaining healthy relationships

## 7 ways to strengthen connections

Healthy personal relationships can provide support and help reduce stress. In fact, studies indicate that people with close friends and family may live longer and experience fewer illnesses. To give your relationships a boost, try the following:

- 1. Prioritize time with friends and family.** Spending time with others can elevate your mood and strengthen your connections.
- 2. Check in.** Between visits, take time to make a phone call, send an email, or write a quick note. It's a reminder that you care and value the relationship.
- 3. "Date" your spouse or partner.** This might be a challenge if you have young children. But the date can be as simple as watching a movie together after your child is in bed.
- 4. Make new friends.** Forming new contacts with people who share your interests can help you feel that someone understands your daily challenges. Try parenting groups, a spiritual community, or volunteer events.
- 5. Communicate openly.** Be honest about how you feel. For example, if you're feeling too exhausted to talk, say so. Also listen to understand, rather than to respond.
- 6. Express gratitude.** Saying a sincere thank you to a friend or family member—whether it's for something they did, or for just being who they are—celebrates the positive and brings people closer.
- 7. Be present.** Giving someone your full attention is one of the best gifts you can give. While it's sometimes necessary to multitask, mindfulness improves communication quality.



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