



# Connect With Others

## CHALLENGE

Make time to build social bonds

### Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read “Connect With Others.”
2. Make time to build social bonds and connect with others
3. Keep a record of your completed health challenge in case your organization requires documentation.



In the middle of a holiday party with family, Chuck Noland leaves in a hurry to deal with a problem at work in the movie *Cast Away*. It could have waited.

But Noland (played by Tom Hanks) is obsessed with his job. His family and friends don't seem to matter

as much to him. So while everyone else is celebrating, he boards a plane that flies into a terrible storm.

The plane crashes in the middle of the ocean. Noland is the only survivor. Only then does he begin to realize the value of relationships. He even names a volleyball “Wilson.” Then he talks to it like a person about his daily life, ideas, thoughts, and concerns.

Four years later, Nolan finally builds a raft with a sail to try and get off the island. But during his attempt, “Wilson” falls from the raft and drifts away. Losing that only source of companionship hits Nolan hard. And it's another reminder to him that the people in his life are important.

How would you rate your relationships with others at home or at work? Excellent, fair, could be better? If you want to live a healthy life, it's no secret that you should eat a balanced diet and get regular exercise. But healthy living doesn't stop there.

Healthy and positive relationships can have a powerful impact on your happiness, health, and longevity. Take the month-long Health Challenge to Connect With Others.

### The Connection Quiz

How much do you know about the benefits of healthy relationships and connecting with others? Take the quiz to find out.



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1.   People with strong social bonds recover faster from illness or injury.
2.   Chronic loneliness has no impact on how long you will live.
3.   Half of all adults feel alone, isolated, or left out, at times.
4.   Long-term loneliness may be just as harmful as smoking cigarettes.
5.   People with a supportive group of friends eat healthier and get more exercise.

How did you do? Research shows your social network can impact your health in positive ways.<sup>1</sup> People with strong social bonds tend to be healthier, live longer, and feel happier than lonely people. Don't have strong social bonds? Now is always the best time to start making friends and nurturing relationships.

Answers: 1.True, 2.True, 3.False, 4.True, 5.True.

## How to Live a Long & Healthy Life with the Ones You Love

Want to live longer? It's a topic Harvard researcher Dr. Robert Waldinger has been studying for decades.<sup>2</sup>

He and other health researchers have spent hours looking for the secrets to health and long life. It turns out genetics, health habits, and living conditions aren't the only factors.

“The surprising finding is that our relationships and how happy we are in our relationships has a powerful influence on our health,” says Waldinger.

Good connections improve health  
<https://tinyurl.com/okgiwzg>



## 7 Easy Ways to Connect with Others

If you want to build healthier relationships, you have to be willing to do your part. And it's really not that hard. Here are seven ways you can connect with others.

### 1. Keep promises

If you say you're going to get a project done on deadline, or plan to meet a friend for coffee, clear your schedule to make it happen. If you don't think you can do it, don't make a promise and then back out. If you need more time, come up short, or can't keep your promise, let others know as soon as possible.

### 2. Be dependable

When people know they can count on you to get stuff done, follow through, and take action, you'll build a stronger bond.

Fun fact: When two kids thousands of miles apart in different countries began writing to each other as penpals 20-plus years ago, they built a bond. After decades of staying in touch, Caitlin Alifirenka and Martin Ganda even wrote the book: *I Will Always Write Back: How One Letter Changed Two Lives*.

### 3. Be honest

Long before Abraham Lincoln was president, he worked in a small store. When he realized he short-changed a shopper a few cents, he closed the store and walked miles to deliver the correct change. It's one of many acts of honesty that earned him the nickname, "Honest Abe." At home and at work, be honest. It really is the best policy.

### 4. Apologize

Stuff happens. People make mistakes. You miss a meeting. You can't make it to your kid's soccer game. The company email you wrote has typos. If you really want to build stronger bonds with others, let people know you're sorry when you've done something wrong or made a mistake.

### 5. Listen

There's at least one reason Ernest Hemingway was such a great writer with a literary gift. He was a good listener. "When people talk, listen completely," said Hemingway. "Most people never listen." The next time someone is talking to you, listen. Focus on what they're saying. And the next time you have something to say, they'll be more likely to listen, too.

### 6. Be supportive

Let's face it. Work life and family life don't always jive. And stuff happens, like a death

Be social to live longer  
<https://tinyurl.com/vcy78z8n>

## So what's the secret to a long and healthy life?

Research shows these nine things make a difference:



1. Keep on learning.
2. Don't smoke—quit if you do.
3. Avoid or limit alcohol.
4. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.
5. Be physically active.
6. Maintain a healthy weight, or lose weight if you need to.
7. Sleep 7 to 8 hours a night.
8. Learn to adapt to events and situations.
9. **And last but not least:** Build strong bonds with others.

Research shows that strong bonds with others are good for your heart and your health.<sup>3</sup> They help reduce stress, lower the risk for heart disease, ward off depression and loneliness, and may even slow age-related memory loss.

in the family, car accident, career changes, family matters, or financial woes.

Take care of your family. Or when a friend or co-worker is facing a challenge, be supportive, and step in to help out when you can. Send a letter, text message, or email. Call or stop by, just to let them know you care.

### 7. Share a laugh

Sharing a laugh with family and friends helps build stronger bonds.<sup>4</sup> Share a funny joke, meme, story, video or social media post. Or watch a funny movie together.

Life isn't always easy, but a little laughter can help you and the people you care about.

"Laughter causes the release of endorphins," says Loma Linda University researcher Dr. Lee S. Berk. "...It also decreases cortisol, which then reduces stress."

### Make connections to live long and prosper

When you make the effort to connect with others, you'll feel happier, be healthier, and live longer. You can even call or text someone you care about right now.

Why connection & kindness matter  
<https://tinyurl.com/9zpd37rz>

### References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). How does social connectedness affect health? From: <https://tinyurl.com/sjbppp2j>
2. Mineo, L. (2017). Good genes are nice, but joy is better. Harvard University. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y9o0ynak>
3. Freebourn, N., et al. (2019). Perceived social support and the risk of cardiovascular disease and all-cause mortality in the Women's Health Initiative Observational Study. *Menopause*, 26(7): 698-707. From: <https://tinyurl.com/mrxdtfpm>
4. Manninen, S., et al. (2017). Social laughter triggers endogenous opioid release in humans. *Journal of Neuroscience*, 37(25): 6125-6131. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y37u3nvw>



# Connect With Others

## CHALLENGE

Make time to build social bonds

### Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, or add to your digital calendar).
2. Make time to build social bonds and connect with others.
3. Use the calendar to record your actions and choices to connect with others.
4. Review your progress at the end of each day, each week, and at the end of the month. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____		
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\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I connected with others

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I exercised at least 30 minutes

### Other wellness projects completed this month:

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_