



# SOCIAL SUPPORT

The Healthy Benefits of Social Support



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VIP Innovations, LLC



How much does social support matter? You probably already have some idea the benefits of having a strong circle of friends, mentors, and associates to help you along the way as you set out to achieve your goals.

But did you know having a strong social support network can also improve your health?

Surprisingly, several studies have proven the benefit of being well connected socially to health and well-being. Let's take a look to add a few of the more exciting and perhaps little-known perks to having strong social support.



# Mental Health Benefits

Very few people take into account just how useful a robust social circle can be when it comes to mental health. There are numerous emotional benefits to having people you can rely on. It's been proven time and again, people without a strong social circle are more likely to be prone to anxiety, depression, and even suicidal thoughts.

## **Stress Management**

Stress comes when you're feeling overloaded and overburdened. You feel it most when you've taken too much on, or when you feel you are not up to the task. When you have strong social support, you realize you don't have to do everything alone. This takes a lot of the burden off, especially as you come to lean on your support to help you figure out the next steps, and how to cope with what's going on which is causing the stress in the first place.

## **Better Emotional Control**

When you have the regular outlet of people to talk to, do you find it much easier to control your emotions? This is especially noted when you have enough close friends who allow you to vent when times get tough. Having a shoulder to cry on means you have a release for your emotions instead of suppressing them. For instance, when you suppress your emotions that they come out unexpectedly in other, less healthy ways such as depression or rage.

## **Better Cognition**

Your social circle gives you people you can talk to, who help you to see all sides of a problem. Because of their input, you will find yourself thinking more clearly when it comes time to make decisions. In fact, it's this kind of discussion that helps keep your mind sharp and trains you in problem-solving skills. Just how important is this? Go on to the next item of this list and find out.

## **Reduces Risk of Dementia**

Yes, your social circle can even help stave off memory issues as they grow older. Staying engaged with the world has been found to be one of the most crucial things you can do to keep your mind sharp. In-depth conversations with other



people, frequent forays into problem-solving, and creative discussions are all necessary to keep the neural connections sharp and your mind active. The better and more active your social circle, the better you'll do as you age, mainly if your circle includes people younger than you.

### **Improved Self-Esteem**

Anytime you have a big circle of friends, you're going to feel better about yourself. After all, they see something positive in you. Why don't you? If your group is good at giving positive feedback, you'll find your negative self-talk starts to disappear, and you do start to believe others' high opinion of you.

### **Less Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms**

When you're stressed or unhappy, you turn to different types of behaviors to cope. Alcohol, drug use, even sex, become ways to bury your emotions and shove away what you can't deal with on your own. With a strong support group, you're less likely to engage in those behaviors, having better methods at your disposal to cope. Besides, do you think your support circle will let you get away with self-destructive behavior?

### **Crisis Management**

What do you do when it feels like your world is about to end? Without a healthy support system coping with a critical diagnosis, a sudden loss, or your impending death, it can seem impossible. When you have support, you find out you manage these storms of life much better. You don't have to go through the hard stuff alone. Your support with circle helps you cope with the hard questions, the next steps, and everything in between. This kind of support can even help prevent PTSD even in intensely traumatic situations.

### **More Motivated**

Been feeling kind of draggy? Not with the right support circle around. You can always count on your crew to keep you pumped up about your goals. These are your accountability partners and your cheerleaders. They've got your back and want nothing more than to see you succeed. How can you not be motivated with a group like this on your side? You'd be amazed at how positive this helps you feel.



# Physical Health Benefits

So, what about physically? Can your social support system impact you even here? The answer is a resounding yes. Whether or not you have a strong support circle will determine how long you live. How's that for life-changing?

## **Healthier Choices**

If we're fortunate, our support circle has members who engage in healthy behaviors such as regular exercise and eating right. With people around you who are already doing the 'right' thing, it's much easier for you to follow suit, joining them in healthy behaviors. Add to this the idea of having people around you who want to see you at your very best; you're sure to get a lot of encouragement to break old, destructive habits, and engage in healthier ones.

## **Lowers Blood Pressure**

Anytime you can lower your stress, your blood pressure will go down. But it's also worthwhile to note, having a trusted social circle helps keep you relaxed in other ways. Having people to talk to intimately about the things which bother you helps you to let go of heavy emotions. Having this kind of resource can also save you from physical work, which might be too taxing by being able to delegate rather than try to take on everything yourself.

## **Better Cardiovascular Health**

It follows then if your blood pressure is better, your heart is likely to be healthier as well. Here's something you might not know, though. Studies have shown stress changes how your platelets react in your blood, meaning you're at higher risk for heart attacks when you're feeling overwhelmed. Now, aren't you glad you have social support to keep this from happening?

## **Less Risk of Stroke**

Remember the platelets we just talked about in the last point? For this reason, stress can also put you at higher risk for stroke. Wow, your social support system really does a lot to protect you already, doesn't it?



### **Improved Immune System**

A recent study done by the University of Chicago has a lot to say about what happens when you don't have much social support. Perhaps the most intriguing is the fact people without this kind of network tend to get sick a lot more often than people who do. So much so, it can be clearly stated having a reliable social circle improves your immune system significantly, leading to fewer sick days.

### **Pain Control**

Even further studies have found people with no support had worse problems with inflammation and pain. Even more amazing? When you have someone nearby supporting you while in pain, your symptoms will ease significantly, reducing pain levels across the board.

### **Better Health Outcomes**

How are you coming with those follow-up appointments, physical therapy, or remembering to take your medication? All these things are areas where having a healthy support system can really help. For one thing, your friends will help keep you accountable, so you follow through where you need to. But also, because they care, you can expect them to check in with you or be ready to lend a hand in other ways. Having someone to go with you to appointments can be incredibly supportive, especially if you're facing a scary medical diagnosis such as cancer or heart disease. Studies have shown people with strong support will do better post-surgery, they heal faster and have better long-range outcomes.

### **Live Longer**

A study done by Brigham-Young University had some pretty surprising things to say about lifespan and a positive support system. It was discovered people without support were more likely to die younger, in part because they experience more health challenges due to their social isolation. But another study done in conjunction with the University of Chapel Hill North Carolina found even more disturbing news. Without strong social support, you're 50% more likely to die younger, losing years off your life.



With so much impact across the board, it's no wonder your social support system is so important. With your mental and physical health both at stake, it's definitely time to start paying attention to who you're spending your time with. After all, not just any friends will do. You need solid relationships that aren't toxic for the best results.

Once you find them, though, imagine how great life will be!

*Inspiration, from whatever the source, arouses feelings within us that rekindle hope, ambition, and determination. It is a momentary whisper of encouragement and reassurance that causes us to become aware of our potential. [Jim Rohn](#),*