

WELLNESS CONNECTION

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INSPIRE TO MOVE - Strengthen Your Social Muscles



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Life is full of changes. Whether we are living through a pandemic together, relocating, changing jobs, starting at a new school, or adopting some other lifestyle change, we must adapt to our new social circles. Humans are social beings by nature so learning how to strengthen our social muscles by overcoming the sense of ambivalence about how to interact with others again will be beneficial to creating new friendships.

When meeting new people, give yourself permission to set small, achievable goals and try to accept that others are going to have a

different response than you. For example, you may prefer eating lunch at a favorite restaurant, but someone else may want to try some place new. Accept that certain activities may feel challenging for a short time, but be ready to create a new normal – one that is functional for you.

Start socializing a bit at a time and if your plate becomes too full or if you feel uncomfortable, politely decline some invitations. It is okay to say no. Getting out there again is the key to moving in the right social direction.

Here are a few great tips on how to [strengthen your social muscles](#):

- **Strike up a conversation with a stranger.** Pick a fellow dog walker or the new office buddy down the hall. Make eye contact and talk to them as a person rather than as a function. Be interested in people's stories – ask related questions and pay attention.
- **Share food with someone.** Eating a meal together boosts your mood and is a potential antidote for loneliness.
- **Tell someone a joke in person.** You may have to work on your timing if you are out of practice. Eye contact and laughter are essential to feel connected to someone.
- **Ask someone what music they are listening to or what book they are reading right now.** Music and literature may be a community-building gift. Listen to music together, exchange books, and have an in-person discussion afterward.
- **Move with someone.** Dance, run, walk, swim, or even fold the laundry or do the dishes together. Physical synchronicity is one of the most important ways we have to connect with someone else.
- **Make a date for the future.** Think of something fun to do with someone. It could be a summer beach weekend, going to the dog park, or out to dinner. Having something to look forward to is essential for your well-being.

Friendships are one of those things that may take some work, but it is well worth the effort. Do yourself a favor by getting out there and having fun with it!

