

The Importance of Socializing for Seniors

The need for company, love, and support is not something that diminishes as we grow older. In fact, a healthy social life is particularly important for seniors. Read on to learn why, and what to do about it.



Why Socializing Matters

Healthy relationships are necessary at every age, but the importance of socialization for seniors cannot be overemphasized. Consistent social interactions help keep people mentally, physically and emotionally fit. Of course, they also fend off the

difficulties inherent to isolation and make our lives feel more meaningful in an overall sense.

Let's have a look at the specific ways that the older adults in our lives benefit from a rewarding social life.

The Health Benefits of Older Adult Socialization

Older adults with a fulfilling social life tend to avoid many of the physical, cognitive and emotional difficulties that seniors who are isolated encounter. There are a number of important ways that socialization can improve senior health, as explained by LiveStrong:

- **Reduced stress.** Older adults who are socially active handle stress better. This leads to important increases in cardiovascular health and an improved immune system.
- **Longer lifespan.** High levels of socialization in seniors help increase longevity.
- **More fitness.** Older adults with diverse social supports are more likely to exercise regularly, which leads to a host of physical, mental and cognitive benefits.

- Reduced risk of depression. Consistent socialization reduces the likelihood that seniors will experience the depression caused by isolation and loneliness.
- Less anxiety. Similarly, senior socialization reduces levels of anxiety as well.
- Greater self-esteem. Socialization helps seniors maintain their self esteem and sense of worth.

The Cognitive Benefits of Senior Socialization

Just as importantly, socialization can provide a tremendous boost to a senior's cognitive health as well. Positive social interactions on a consistent basis help keep seniors stimulated, mentally sharp and intellectually engaged.

Not surprisingly, the improvements in these cognitive areas can help prevent general cognitive decline, including memory loss, Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Importantly, when these social interactions include exercise groups, the benefits of both are increased significantly.

As you can see, the upshot of all this is that healthy socialization leads to an increase in the quality of life seniors experience on a daily basis. Now let's have a look at some of the obstacles to socialization that seniors often face.

Obstacles to Senior Socialization

In order to improve the social life of older adults, it will be helpful to understand some of the obstacles seniors encounter when trying to stay active and cultivate healthy relationships. Here are some of the most commonly reported difficulties seniors face in this regard:

- Physical ailments
- Loss of a spouse or other loved one
- Isolation and/or mobility problems
- Real or perceived cognitive decline
- Less availability of family members to assist with social activities

An inspection of this list of obstacles will show that some of them are more difficult to overcome than others, but it is imperative that both older adults and their loved ones

endeavor to eliminate or mitigate them as much as possible. Otherwise, it will be that much more difficult to find and participate in the social activities that deliver so many diverse benefits to older adult loved ones.

The key is active intervention. A lack of socialization can lead to the very difficulties that prevent it. Without intervention, this can quickly develop into a vicious cycle that is difficult to escape. That's why it's important to get involved early on before any of the above obstacles become rooted in our senior loved one's lives.

Fortunately, it's never too late. The longer you wait, the more difficult it will become to develop the necessary social life. But there are always positive ways to intervene, no matter how far the problem has progressed. Now that we know the benefits of senior socialization, the question then becomes: how can seniors and their loved ones promote a healthy social life? We'll explore possible answers to this question in the next section.



6 Ways Seniors Can Cultivate a Healthy Social Life

For many older adults, continued socialization doesn't happen on its own. Strategies, commitment and diligence are often required.

Here are 6 ways that seniors and their loved ones can cultivate a healthy social life:

- Build and maintain positive relationships with grandchildren.
- Do volunteer work (this has the added benefit of keeping us busy and engaged during retirement).
- Take advantage of community resources such as senior centers, religious organizations and the events at independent and assisted living facilities.

- Organize social activities on your own and include seniors who might be experiencing isolation or loneliness.
- Help maintain a sense of purpose by caring for a pet, church attendance or the pursuit of hobbies and interests.
- Loves ones: Ensure that older adults have adequate transportation to and from social activities.

How a Retirement-Life Community Can Help

Hopefully, the above information proves helpful in improving you or your loved one's social life and overall sense of well-being. If nothing else, we at least hope you take away the following truth: Senior socialization offers many benefits, and a healthy social life is both necessary and obtainable for every older adult in our lives.

The best ways to create a healthy social life depend on you and your family's unique situation. Unfortunately, because of limited time, resources and geographic distance, it can sometimes be difficult for families to provide the necessary social support. And sometimes we don't want to feel like a burden. When this happens, it might be time to seek professional help.

At retirement communities all of the activities are designed to help fulfill your physical, mental and social needs. Diverse opportunities for positive social interactions abound, giving older adults the company, support and engagement they need for their overall well-being.



Meet Michelle Watkins, Retirement Counselor

After many years of working in the industry of retirement living, Michelle now serves as a Retirement Counselor and Marketing Director of Brazos Towers at Bayou Manor. Helping seniors successfully navigate their choices by better understanding the differences between communities and the services they offer, is an important part of her daily role. Whether these individuals end up moving to Brazos Towers at Bayou Manor, or somewhere else, Michelle knows that she and her team have succeeded if visitors leave with the information and tools they need to create a plan that will allow them to thrive in the next chapter of their lives.

*To read my complete blog, please go to JustAskMichelle.com.
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