

Importance of Social Support

Having ample social interactions and good quality relationships can help you live a long and healthy life. When social support is lacking, the risk of disease can increase. The following diagram shows some of the health effects linked with poor social support, isolation, and loneliness.

In fact, in a study conducted of middle-aged men over a seven-year period, those with strong social support were less likely to die early when compared to those with poor social support.

Here are some tips you can use to expand your social network:

- **Cultivate a variety of relationship types.**

Social support usually comes in three types. Emotional, instrumental, and informative.

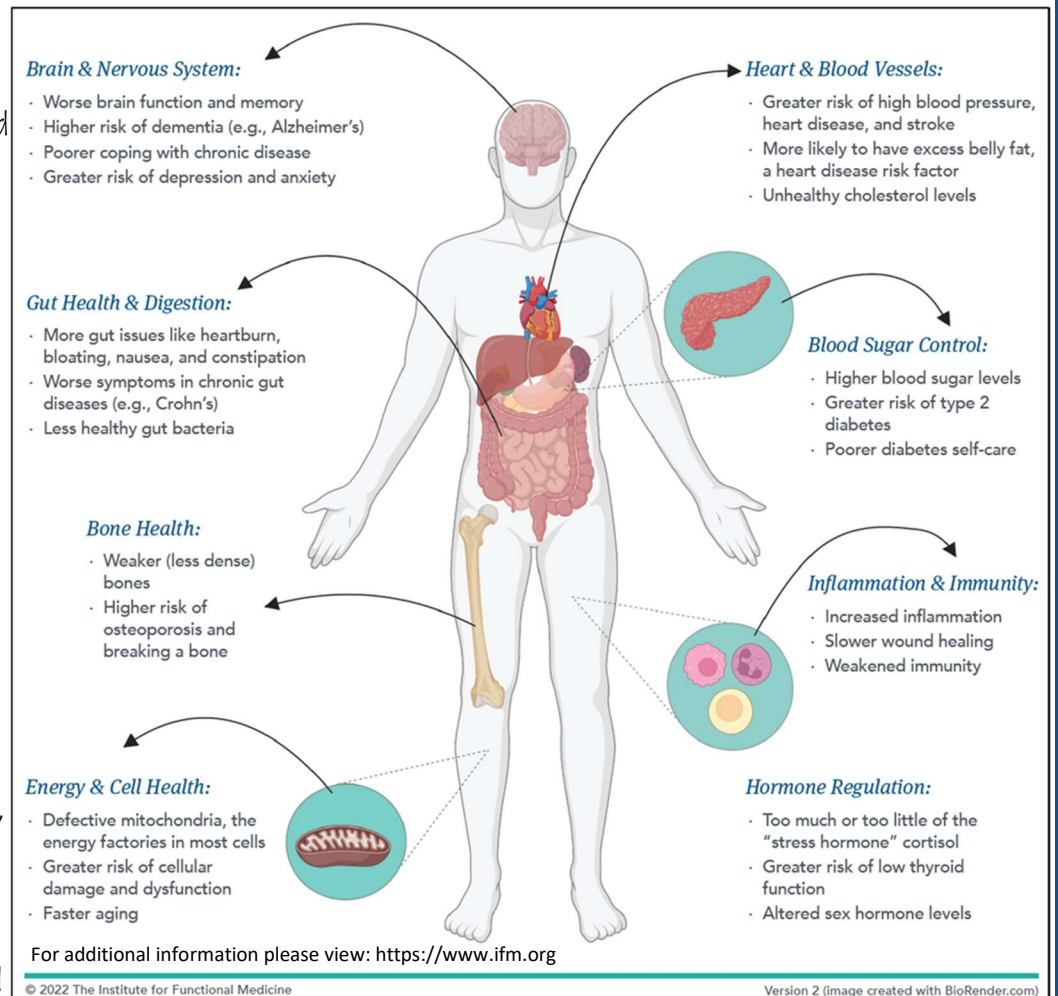
Emotional support is important during times of stress. Instrumental takes care of your physical needs, and informational provides guidance, advice, and mentoring. All three have lasting health benefits.

- **Plan social interactions.** Don't wait for the social interaction to spontaneously develop, be the one to plan it. Also, schedule recurrent social activities, so that planning does not become burdensome.

- **Volunteer, join a running club, or take a class.** A great way to build lasting relationships is to meet people that enjoy activities you also enjoy. Sharing common activities builds a great foundation, whether it be a potential significant other or just a budding friendship.

- **Travel.** Traveling can introduce you to different kinds of people, cultures, and experiences. Some of the best friendships that you can make will be through shared common experiences.

- **Help your neighbors.** Lending a helping hand. This is a great way to start building a relationship with your neighbors. Doing things for each other can be the spark that builds a sense of community and belonging.



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