

Celebrate Social Wellness Month

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July means more than Independence Day, with hot summer days and cool nights at the beach.

July is also Social Wellness Month – 31 days set aside to nurture your social health. It gives you a time period to concentrate on your social relationships and nurture the social side of your being. Volunteer. Join a club. Extend outside of yourself and embrace the world.

Such social wellness is achieved through connections with people. When you give and receive social support you have given yourself the means to foster your own growth. Connecting with people can be a great healing mechanism. It broadens your experiences, and makes you more of an asset to yourself, your family and your friends. Most importantly, it enhances your quality of life and helps you to weather the adversities that are bound to come your way.

There are 3 main forms of social support; these include:

1. Emotional. When you give and receive emotional support you feel cared for and this sort of engagement with another person or a group can give you balance and relieve stress when you need these things the most.
2. Instrumental. This refers to physical support, such as money or housekeeping.
3. Informational. This entails supplying or receiving information that can help you.

Nurturing healthy, social relationships are critical to maintaining good health. People who are alone and isolated have health risks comparable to the risks associated with cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, and obesity.

Conversely, people who have a strong social support network tend to live longer, have better responses to stress, have healthier endocrine and cardiovascular systems and enhanced immune systems, vital to fighting off infectious diseases.

So what does it all come down to? Four words: Grow your social network.

Get out of the house, off the couch, away from the desk and put down the mop this month.

- Work out. Joining a gym or an exercise group allows you to meet new people while exercising.
- Take a walk with your pet. Starting a walking routine after dinner not only gives you another opportunity to be physically active, but it also creates more opportunities for you to meet your neighbors.
- Volunteer. Donate some of your time and hard work to a charity. You'll feel good about the cause,

and you'll meet others with similar passions.

- Find others who share a hobby, such as hiking, painting, scrapbooking, running, etc.

There are countless ways to grow your social network. Consider your interests and hobbies, and then pursue them. You're bound to find others with similar passions. Plus, you'll achieve the vital premise of Social Wellness Month: nurturing and healing yourself.