Maintaining and Enhancing Social Connections in Retirement

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Social Support is associated with...

EVERYTHING!!!
Social Support is associated with...

- lower levels of depression, loneliness, and anxiety
- higher levels of life satisfaction and happiness
- fewer health problems
- faster disease recovery
- a longer life!

With whom do you exchange social support?
MAPPING YOUR SOCIAL NETWORK

Inner Circle: Closest friends or family members...can’t imagine life without them

Middle Circle: Not quite as close, but still important

Outer Circle: People who are less close, but still part of your life

Kahn & Antonucci (1980)
Who makes up your social network?

Common Members:
- Spouse / Partner
- Immediate Family
- Close Friends
- Extended Family
- Acquaintances
- Neighbors
- Co-Workers

*This is our social network or “social convey”*
Social Support

**Definition:** Resources and interactions provided by others that may be useful for helping a person to cope with a problem.

**Types of Support**

*Structural* – quantity
- Network size
- Integration/density
- Homogeneity
- Durability

*Functional* – quality
- Emotional
- Instrumental
- Informational
- Companionship
Structural Changes to Social Network

- Reduction reflects shedding of less important relationships
- Closest and most important relationships remain intact
Consequences of a Smaller Social Network

• For most people, reduction in network size is NOT problematic

• As we age, we have growing awareness that time left to live is limited

• We become more selective with our social contacts
  • choose to spend time with the most meaningful, emotionally rewarding interaction partners

from L. Carstensen’s *Socioemotional Selectivity Theory*
Major Life Events Affecting One’s Social Network

• Health Changes
• Widowhood
• Retirement

*Any of these can impact the structure of our social network and/or the availability of social support
Impact of Retirement on Social Relationships

Retirement is a time of transition. Changes may occur in our:

- Daily schedule
- Contact with others
- Geographic location
- Available resources
ENHANCING SOCIAL TIES
Suggestions for Enhancing Social Ties

After Retirement:

■ Stay Connected to Co-Workers
■ Get Reacquainted with Spouse/Partner
■ Volunteer for a Favorite Cause
■ Join a Social Group
■ Take a Class
■ Try On-Line Social Networking Sites
On-Line Social Networking

- Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest
- AARP online community
- Senior.com
  - www.senior.com
- Third Age
  - www.thirdage.com
# Social Networking Usage

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*Fastest growing group – 75 and over*
If you haven’t yet retired...

consider “phasing out” of your career to give yourself time to “phase into” your post-retirement life.
Regardless of where you are in life...

- maintain connections with others
  - give and receive love and affection
- form new relationships
  - intergenerational relationships, too!
- consider alternate forms of communication
  - e.g., Internet (email, chat rooms, social networking)
Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family: Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one.

-- Jane Howard
Be Social... Be Well!