



spark16

IGNITE YOUR BEST YOU.

16
TIPS TO MAKE
& MAINTAIN
HEALTHY
FRIENDSHIPS

SEE "IGNITING YOUR
BEST YOU!"

A MONTHLY HEALTHLETTER FROM THE WELLNESS COUNCIL OF AMERICA

What If I Prefer to Be Alone?

Some people simply enjoy being alone, and studies suggest that this may not automatically mean health risks increase. Experts note that health risks like high blood pressure and high BMI only seem to increase if one *feels* lonely. Unhealthy behaviors like overeating and drug use also seem to be higher among adults who say they feel lonely. So while it's perfectly fine to spend some quality alone time, research shows that having at least one or two meaningful social connections yields many benefits.

TRY THIS!

If you've spent the week at home and haven't socialized at all, make an effort to talk or get together with a friend or family member over the weekend. A Friday night dinner, a Saturday afternoon lunch or a Sunday brunch are all great options to share a meal and good conversation.



YOUR BFFs:

GOOD FOR THE SOUL AND ALSO YOUR OVERALL HEALTH

There have been several studies over the years on the impact of friends and social connections in one's life, and they all suggest the same thing: good friends are good for your health! Science has revealed that adults with strong social support have a reduced risk of many significant health problems, including depression, high blood pressure and an unhealthy body mass index (BMI).

HERE ARE JUST A FEW OTHER HIGHLIGHTS RESEARCHERS HAVE FOUND:

- » Research from the University of Chicago shows that lonely people have a harder time dealing with stress and are at greater risk of heart disease than people with a wide circle of friends.
- » A study following nearly 1,500 older people for 10 years found that those who had a large network of friends were about 22 percent less likely to die during the 10 years.
- » A 2012 study found that older people's dementia risk increased with their feelings of loneliness.
- » A new review of studies by Michigan State University involving almost 280,000 people

found that investing in the most meaningful and important friends and keeping them close reduces stress and anxiety and makes us feel good.

- » So why are friends so good for us? Some experts believe that good friends can help you adopt healthy habits and steer you away from the bad ones like smoking and heavy drinking. Friends can also help you celebrate good times and provide support and encouragement when you need it most.

Of course, with busy schedules and demanding work lives, many adults find it difficult to develop new friendships or devote the time to existing ones. Developing and maintaining good friendships takes time and effort. But the benefits and joy friendships can provide make it a worthwhile investment.



Check out "Igniting Your Best You" for 16 ways to make maintain, and expand your social network.





ALMOND OATMEAL Pancakes

A wholesome and delicious breakfast.

- ½ cup almond flour
- ½ cup oatmeal
- 4 omega-3 egg whites
- 4 ounces plain yogurt
- pinch of salt
- cooking spray
- cinnamon (optional)
- apples, diced (optional)

DIRECTIONS

Combine ingredients in a blender and blend for 2 minutes. In a nonstick pan, lightly spray the inner surface and using a 2-ounce ladle, place the amount in the pan and cook until brown on one side and then flip. Top with cinnamon or apples for added goodness.

SERVES: 4



Did You Know?
Oatmeal packs a serious punch when it comes to fiber. One serving (1 cup, cooked oatmeal) of oatmeal contains a whopping 4 grams of fiber!



Dr. Ann
WELLNESS

With formal training in nutrition and medicine, plus hands-on experience as a mother of four and family physician, Dr. Ann is a unique nutrition expert for the real world.

The whole food ingredients found in Dr. Ann's recipes are the right foods for health and vitality. Nutritional excellence naturally follows.

For more, visit DrAnnWellness.com.



BREAKFAST SKIPPERS... *take note!*

Think twice before skipping that morning meal. In a study that monitored the breakfast eating habits of over 4,000 subjects free of heart disease or diabetes, researchers found a clear association between missing or skimping on breakfast and early markers for heart disease and diabetes. Researchers found that those who skipped or ate a very light breakfast were at increased risk for developing heart disease with the skippers being at most risk. Relative to the regular breakfast eaters, these two groups (skippers and skimpers) also had bigger waistlines, more body fat, as well as higher blood pressure, blood lipids and blood glucose.

This backs up earlier research published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, which found that healthy women who skipped breakfast had higher cholesterol levels and more insulin resistance than those who ate breakfast. Both elevated cholesterol and insulin resistance are known risk factors for the development of cardiovascular disease.

BUILD A QUICK & HEALTHY BREAKFAST!

Toaster pastries or donuts don't cut it! Make sure every breakfast contains these three components:

PROTEIN: Nuts or nut butters, soy milk, low-fat milk, low-fat yogurt, reduced fat cheeses, smoked or canned salmon, omega-3 eggs, low-fat cottage cheese, high protein cereals, or protein powders (for smoothies) are all great options for breakfast.

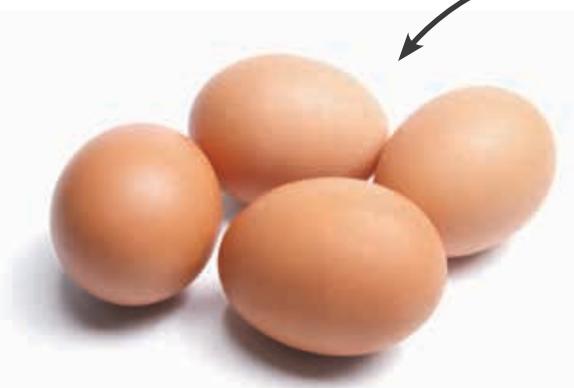


PRODUCE: Fruits, like berries, citrus, red grapes, cantaloupe, kiwi and mango are a natural breakfast fit. Veggies can also play a starring role at breakfast. Spinach, bell peppers, mushrooms, onions and tomatoes are a delicious addition to any egg dish. You can also throw a variety of veggies into smoothies.

WHOLE GRAINS: High fiber cereals and oatmeal are top-rated whole grain foods. Additional healthy choices include 100% whole grain bagels, English muffins, waffles and granola.

Always try to have your breakfast planned the night before:

Set out the ingredients to your breakfast the night before so they are ready for you to grab and go. Better yet, have it all prepared so all you have to do is grab the container. Prepare steel cut oats or oatmeal the night before so you just have to pop it in the microwave the next morning. Or make a smoothie the night before and place in the fridge.



SUPER STAR FOOD OF THE MONTH: OMEGA 3 EGGS

Thanks to modern food technology eggs are now healthier than ever. Many egg producers now fortify their chicken feed with omega 3 fats (usually from fishmeal) which means that this superstar fat gets incorporated into the egg yolk. These "omega 3 eggs" are available at most grocery outlets. Simply look for "DHA or omega 3" on the label.



16 SIMPLE TIPS TO MAKE & MAINTAIN

HEALTHY FRIENDSHIPS



COOL TOOL!

The CleverCards app syncs with your Facebook profile and notifies you when your friends' birthdays are drawing close. It can also track the events you are a part of on Facebook and create custom greeting cards for special occasions like baby showers or graduations.

1 Don't feel embarrassed or ashamed. It's common and normal for friendships to fade and disappear when you get older and other priorities like work and family take the stage. Don't feel bad if you don't have a wide circle of friends anymore. Instead, take heed of these tips and embrace the journey!

2 Say "hi" to everyone. Whether it's in a hallway at work or while you're walking around

in the neighborhood, saying a friendly "hello" every time you see someone is such a simple thing to do and it can actually lead to conversation and friendship.

3 Put your phone away. Checking your Facebook page or texting while you're at lunch with a friend or engaging in conversation with someone is just plain rude and shows that you aren't truly engaged or listening. Not good for making or keeping friends!

4 Remember one thing. When a friend or potential friend is talking, make an effort to remember at least one thing they've mentioned. Then, raise or ask about that item the next time you see them. It shows that you paid attention and care—the hallmarks of a good friend.

5 Be aware of social queues. Some people may not be looking for new friends. If you notice someone isn't asking any questions to get to know

you better, doesn't seem interested in socializing or making plans to meet up again, that person probably isn't looking to pursue a friendship. Focus your energy elsewhere.

6 Invite friends or potential friends to activities you enjoy. If you enjoy cooking, invite friends over for a meal. If you love hiking, ask people to join you.

7 Use technology to help remind you of birthdays and important events. Good friends would never forget another friend's birthday or important event. But we're all human! You can help prevent these mishaps with apps like CleverCards.

8 Set a "friend goal." It may sound odd but it can help you enrich your network. Do you want to spend more time every week with your existing friends? Do you want to meet new people? Do you want to get to know more people at work? Determine what you want, write it down and then make it happen.

9 Rise to the occasion to help. A friendship is a supportive union between two people, so be there for your friends when you can. If you think a friend needs help ask them what you can do. Or do what you think could help. Friends support one another in times of need.

10 Evaluate how certain friends make you feel. Friendships should make you feel good. If a "friend" consistently tries to control you, criticizes you, or brings unwanted drama or negative influences into your life, it's time to end the friendship. Focus on quality not quantity.

11 Take a walk. You may be amazed at how many people you can meet and socialize with on a walk. You can chat with neighbors who are out or head to a popular trail or park and strike up conversations there.

12 Check out meetup.com It's a great social networking site that allows you to pick from various interests like running, writing and cooking and then meet with people who have also selected that interest. Meetups are usually monthly.

13 Be persistent. Don't wait around for people to call or invite you to gatherings. Take the initiative and remember that you may need to suggest plans a few times before you can tell if your interest in a new friend is mutual.

14 Remind yourself it's for your health. Don't feel like socializing? Don't want to make the extra effort to connect with someone? Remind yourself that genuine, nourishing friendships boost your immune system and decrease your chances of developing some chronic health conditions—just to name a few benefits.

15 Get beyond small talk. If you want to establish a true friendship with someone you must go beyond small talk like the weather. If you've spoken for a while or more than once, try to disclose something meaningful about

yourself, like your biggest passion or hobby. This paves the way to more significant connections.

16 Plan something big. Want to really bond and create lasting friendships? Plan a trip together. It's a great way to share experiences, laugh and just spend quality time together.

Remember
TALK WITH YOUR DOCTOR IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH.





WORKING THE LATE SHIFT?

HEALTHY STRATEGIES TO HELP YOU COPE WITH A NON-TYPICAL SCHEDULE



Most Americans with the typical 9 to 5 job have a difficult time getting the recommended 7 to 9 hours of daily sleep, and it's perhaps even more challenging for the nearly 15 million Americans who work full time evening or rotating shifts. Professions like firefighters, police officers, doctors, nurses, paramedics and factory workers usually all have to work evening or irregular hours, and these shifts can make it more difficult to get regular sleep and maintain other good habits like exercise and healthy eating.

Fortunately, research suggests that with a little planning and the right strategies, night workers can still get the recommended amount of sleep and maintain a healthy

lifestyle despite the challenges of a "graveyard" shift.

TAKE NOTE OF THESE THIRD SHIFT HEALTH TIPS:

→ **Stick to a consistent sleep and wake schedule, even on days you don't work.** It's hard work getting your body used to an evening shift, so if you break that routine your body has to start the process all over again. It can take a toll on your body, so try your hardest to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.

→ **Focus on bringing at least one healthy food with you to work every day.** Healthy options are often limited during evening shifts, and it's easy to reach for unhealthy vending machine or gas station

foods. Try to bring at least one healthy item like fruit with peanut butter or veggies with hummus. This will help ensure you get the critical nutrients your body needs (chips, cookies, pastries, etc. have almost no nutritional value). Better yet, try to plan out an entire week's worth of healthy meals and snacks you can bring to work.

→ **Steer clear of caffeine four to five hours before the end of your shift.** Drinking a cup of coffee at the beginning of your shift can help you feel alert and awake. But, caffeine stays in your body for several hours, so make sure you don't have any caffeine towards the end of your shift so your body can begin to properly wind down for home and sleep.

→ **Take walk breaks and try to exercise daily.** Physical activity has countless health benefits, and with moderate, consistent activity you may be able to fall and stay asleep better too.

→ **Wear sunglasses and a hat to protect yourself from bright light on the way home.** Morning light gives your brain the signal that it's time to get up. For evening workers, this is the opposite of what you need. Wear wrap around glasses and a cap to protect yourself from bright light and drive straight home (don't stop to run errands).

→ when to see a doctor

If you're consistently making errors at work because you're tired and fatigued, or if you're falling asleep on your commute and/or feel concerned about your overall health see your health care provider. Your primary care provider may prescribe sleep medications or recommend additional strategies to help ease the strain of shift work. Your doctor may also recommend you see a sleep specialist to address and treat your symptoms.



Are You Financially Stable?



Below are a few signs that you're likely on the right path to a stable and healthy financial life. If these signs don't apply to you right now, don't fret—it's never too late to start making smarter financial decisions and building your nest egg (see the column for some tools and resources that can get you on track)!

You don't lose sleep or argue over money. If you can't sleep well or regularly argue with your spouse over your finances, you need to create a plan and address what's causing the heartache. Maybe you can cut some luxuries like cable TV, eating out or regular stops at the coffee shop.

You don't use credit cards for daily purchases or out of necessity. Many people who aren't financially stable use credit cards regularly for things like groceries and gas or for things they just can't afford to pay for in cash. The one exception is if you use credit cards regularly to build up points or rewards offered by your credit card company. The catch here is that you must pay the balances off every month.

If you lost your job, you could still pay your bills. People who are financially stable have emergency funds set aside so that unexpected events like the loss of a job wouldn't set them back. Most experts recommend having at least three to six months of living expenses set aside; this should be enough to cover you if you lose your job.

You pay bills on time. This is a great indicator that you're not living beyond your means, as you always have enough cash on hand to pay your bills. It shows that you're ahead of your finances, not behind.

You contribute the maximum retirement contribution that you're allowed, or your contribution is into double digit percentages. Many people only contribute the bare minimum (or like many others, they don't contribute at all) to their retirement because they need that money to pay for other things. Those who are financially stable can make healthy retirement contributions because they don't have things like high credit card balances or steep mortgages to pay.



TOOLS TO HELP

Need help getting your finances straight? Fortunately, there are tons of tools right at your fingertips. Here are just a few to get you started:



Financial calculators:

Visit financialcalculator.org and see how long it may take you to pay off credit cards or punch in some numbers and learn how much you really need to put away to retire when you want to.



Create a budget:

Mint.com may be one of the most well-known budgeting websites. Simply enter basic information such as banking, credit and investment accounts, and Mint will automatically track your money.



Get a grip on daily spending:

Visit levelmoney.com and download a handy app that lets you know what you can spend each month, week and day. A quick glance at your personalized tracker shows how much you have left to spend to stay on track.



Pay off debt: Check out ReadyforZero.com if you're looking for help paying down debt. The website will help you create a plan and offers tips and strategies to pay off your debt.



15
 MILLION

Nearly 15 million Americans work full time evening or rotating shifts.



22
 PERCENT

A study following nearly 1,500 older people for 10 years found that those who had a large network of friends were about 22 percent less likely to die during the 10 years of the study.



3-6
 MONTHS

Most experts recommend having at least three to six months of living expenses set aside; this should be enough to cover you if you lose your job or experience a large unexpected expense.



Did you know that February 11th is National Make A Friend Day? It's a great day to think about making a new friendship or, taking a moment to connect with someone you've lost touch with.

CHECK THIS OUT

Facebook, the most widely used social networking site grows year over year, connecting people all over the world. Here are some interesting facts on just how widespread and common Facebook is:

- » Nearly 2 billion people use the social networking site.
- » On average, there are over one billion daily active users on the site, according to December 2015 statistics. The number of average mobile users is nearly as high, at 934 million a day.
- » Approximately 83.6 percent of these daily active users are outside of the United States and Canada.



WHAT'S IN A NUMBER?

32
 YEARS

If you have a \$5,000 credit card balance with a 15% interest rate and paid the minimum monthly payment (usually 2% of your balance) it would take you 32 years to pay it off!

9
 YEARS

If you have a \$5,000 credit card balance with a 15% interest rate and you paid just 3% more every month (5% of your balance) you would trim the payoff time to 9 years.

