



## CONNECT – A sense of belonging

Dan Buettner is an internationally recognised researcher in living well and long. He identified communities that achieved better health and lived longer lives and termed these areas *Blue Zones*. Buettner found that a common aspect of all *Blue Zone* elders is their sense of family and community.

Friendships endure throughout lifetimes. However, staying connected isn't always easy as you grow older—even for those who have always had an active social life. Retirement, illness and death can take away close friends and family members. The older you get, the more people you lose. What's more, getting around may become more difficult.

Therefore it's important to find ways to reach out and connect to others. Loneliness and isolation are major threats to aging well. Having people you can turn to for company and support is a buffer against depression, disability, hardship, and loss. There are lots of ways to be with other people. It doesn't matter what you do, so long as you get out of the house and socialise.

### Staying Connected Tips

- **Connect regularly with friends and family.**  
Spend time with people you enjoy and who make you feel positive. It may be a neighbour who you like to walk with, a catch up over coffee with an old friend, or shopping with your children.
- **Make an effort to make new friends**  
As you lose people in your circle, it is vital to make new connections so your circle doesn't dwindle. Why not join a group where the members' ages vary. Make it a point to befriend people who are younger. Younger friends can reenergise you. Regular face-to-face contact helps you to ward off depression and stay positive.
- **Volunteer**  
Giving back to the community is a wonderful way to strengthen social bonds and meet other people. Volunteering is a natural way to meet others interested in similar activities or who share similar values.
- **Find support groups in times of change.**  
If you or a loved one is coping with a chronic illness or recent loss, it can be very helpful to participate in a support group with others experiencing the same challenges.

### Further Information

Phone Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre 1800 052 222

Contact your local council

Go online to [www.sacommunity.org](http://www.sacommunity.org)

**Source:** The National Geographic book, *Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer from the People Who've Lived the Longest* by Dan Buettner