



Seasons of Wellbeing

Strengthen Your Community



Strong communities don't happen by chance—they're built through connection and care. Through everyday interactions, small acts of appreciation, and a shared sense of responsibility, we create environments where people feel supported and valued. From how we show up for one another to how we care for the world around us, community plays a powerful role in strengthening resilience and overall wellbeing.

Curated Finds to Help You Strengthen Your Community

Mental Health Minute

Watch this month's video about anxiety with Catherine Van Tassell.

Watch Now ▶



Community Corner

JustServe.org is a free, easy-to-use website that connects people with volunteer opportunities in their local communities. You can search by location, cause, or interest to find ways to give back. Opportunities range from one-time projects to ongoing roles, making it simple to find something that fits your schedule and interests.

Media Picks

READ

Together by Dr. Vivek Murthy

The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World

Former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy explores loneliness as a public health issue and explains how connection supports physical and mental wellbeing.

WATCH

The Power of Vulnerability with Brené Brown

TED Talk

Brené Brown studies human connection – our ability to empathize, belong, love. In a poignant, funny talk, she shares a deep insight from her research, one that sent her on a personal quest to know herself as well as to understand humanity.

LISTEN

The Happiness Lab with Dr. Laurie Santos Episode: The Secret to Making Friends as an Adult

Loneliness is a far more common and far more serious problem than we think. It affects one in five Americans and takes a toll on our bodies and minds. To thrive we need to several types of social interactions – both casual and more intimate.

Spring Lemon Chicken with Asparagus & New Potatoes

Serves 4



MAKE IT YOURS

- Swap chicken for chickpeas or white beans for a plant-forward option
- Add spinach or arugula at the end for extra greens
- Serve with crusty bread or a simple grain

Ingredients

- 1½ lbs baby or new potatoes, halved
- 1 lb asparagus, trimmed
- 4 boneless chicken thighs or breasts
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper

Optional

- Fresh herbs for garnish

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Toss potatoes with 1½ tbsp olive oil, half the salt, and pepper. Spread on a baking sheet and roast for 20 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, mix remaining olive oil, garlic, lemon zest, and lemon juice.
4. Add chicken and asparagus to the baking sheet. Drizzle with lemon mixture and sprinkle with remaining salt.
5. Roast for another 15–20 minutes, until chicken is cooked through and asparagus is tender.
6. Finish with fresh herbs before serving.

Strengthen Your Community



When we hear “community,” we often picture large groups, social events, or being constantly connected. In reality, community functions more like a support system than a social calendar. From brief conversations to shared routines, community shapes how supported we feel, how we handle stress, and how connected we are to the world around us. These moments don’t have to be large or formal to matter. In fact, some of the most meaningful forms of community are the ones we barely notice at first.

Research shows that maintaining a sense of community is a protective factor for both physical and mental health. It influences stress levels, recovery, resilience, and even longevity. Community provides emotional regulation during stress, practical support during life disruptions, and a sense of belonging that reduces isolation. On the other hand, prolonged social isolation has been linked to increased risk for anxiety, depression, cardiovascular disease, and burnout.

Not All Connections Serve the Same Purpose

Community is often discussed as if all relationships function the same way. Different types of connections support wellbeing in different and complementary ways. Some relationships provide emotional closeness and a sense of safety. Others offer perspective, practical help, or access to information. Each plays a role in how supported a person feels and no single connection is meant to meet every need.

Researchers often describe these layers of connection as a network, rather than a circle. A healthy network includes a range of relationships that vary in closeness, frequency, and function.

- Emotionally close relationships can offer comfort, trust, and a sense of being understood.
- Everyday social connections can reduce feelings of isolation and increase a sense of belonging, even without deep personal sharing.
- Professional or structured relationships can provide guidance, stability, and continuity during periods of stress or change.

When one type of connection is missing or overextended, people may feel unsupported even if they are not alone. Strengthening community often means balancing these different forms of support, rather than deepening a single relationship.



A Thought Reframe Worth Considering

Instead of asking:

"How can I be more social?"

Try asking:

*"Where do I feel supported
— and where do I need
more support?"*

Rethink Connection

Support doesn't only come from scheduled conversations or close relationships. Many of the strongest support systems are built through brief, consistent points of contact that fit naturally into daily life. Expanding how you connect can make support more accessible especially during busy or high-stress seasons.

Expanding the Ways You Connect

Support comes in many forms. Consider how these different touchpoints might already be part of your day:

Workday Touchpoints

- A coworker who sends a "thinking of you" message
- A shared moment of humor during a meeting
- A quick Slack or Teams exchange that builds rapport
- A leader who makes room for real conversations

Everyday Familiarity

- A neighbor you chat with while walking the dog
- A friendly face you see regularly but briefly
- Small acts of reciprocity that build trust over time

Ongoing Digital Presence

- Group texts that keep you connected without pressure
- Voice notes that replace long phone calls
- Marco Polo messages that add tone and expression
- Casual check-ins that don't require immediate response

Trusted Support Roles

- A healthcare provider who listens and follows up
- A clinician or therapist who offers consistency
- A benefits or care advocate who helps navigate next steps

Shared Interest & Experience

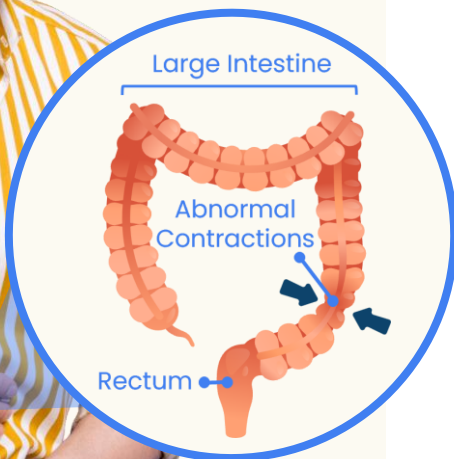
- Online groups built around parenting, caregiving, or hobbies
- Peer spaces that normalize shared challenges
- Community forums where support is exchanged informally

Different types of connection meet different needs. When support is spread across multiple sources, it becomes easier to access, less emotionally heavy on a person, more adaptable during busy or stressful times.



Clinical Check-In

Irritable Bowel Syndrome



Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a common digestive condition that affects how the gut functions. It's considered a functional gastrointestinal disorder, meaning symptoms occur without visible structural damage.

IBS can look different from person to person and may change over time.

Common Symptoms

Symptoms often come and go and may include:

- Abdominal pain or cramping
- Bloating or gas
- Diarrhea, constipation, or alternating between both
- Changes in stool appearance or frequency
- Relief of discomfort after a bowel movement

Stress, certain foods, hormonal changes, and routine disruptions can all influence symptoms.

Who's at Risk?

IBS can affect people of all ages and backgrounds, but certain factors are associated with a higher likelihood of experiencing symptoms.

People may be at increased risk if they:

- Have a personal or family history of digestive conditions

- › Experience ongoing or high levels of stress
- › Have a history of anxiety or depression
- › Have had a gastrointestinal infection in the past
- › Experience changes in routine, sleep, or eating patterns
- › Are sensitive to certain foods or dietary changes

IBS is more commonly diagnosed in women and often begins in early adulthood, though symptoms can develop at any stage of life.

When to Check In With a Provider

It's important to talk with a healthcare provider if you experience:

- › Ongoing digestive symptoms
- › Symptoms that interfere with daily life
- › New or worsening pain
- › Unexplained weight loss, bleeding, or symptoms at night

A provider can help rule out other conditions and discuss appropriate treatment options.

Questions to Ask Your Provider

If you're experiencing ongoing digestive symptoms, consider asking:

- › What type of IBS might I have?
- › Are there tests needed to rule out other conditions?
- › What dietary changes may help my symptoms?
- › How does stress affect IBS, and what support options are available?
- › What treatment options are appropriate for my symptoms?
- › When should I follow up or seek additional care?

These conversations can help guide care that fits your needs.

Digestive health is closely connected to stress and overall wellbeing. If symptoms are affecting your day-to-day life, support is available and you don't have to manage it alone.

Trend Talk

Gut Health



Interest in gut-focused eating has grown as research continues to highlight the gut's role in digestion, immunity, mood, and overall wellbeing. As conditions like digestive discomfort, stress-related symptoms, and food sensitivities become more common, people are looking beyond quick fixes toward eating patterns that support long-term balance.

Rather than restrictive diets, the trend reflects a shift toward sustainable, evidence-informed approaches, emphasizing fiber, variety, and mindful eating as ways to support the gut.

Why It Matters

Supports Mental & Emotional Wellbeing

The gut and brain communicate constantly through the gut-brain axis. Digestive discomfort is often linked with stress, anxiety, and mood changes, making gut health an important part of emotional wellbeing.

Influences Immune Function

A large portion of the immune system lives in the gut. When gut health is supported, the body may be better equipped to manage inflammation and illness.

Affects Energy & Daily Comfort

Digestive symptoms like bloating, discomfort, or irregularity can impact focus, energy, and daily routines. Improving gut health can support more consistent comfort throughout the day.

Reflects Whole-Body Balance

Sleep quality, stress levels, movement, and routine all influence how the gut functions. Gut health often mirrors how supported the body feels overall.

Simple Ways to Support Gut Health

Beyond Diet

1. Manage Stress Regularly

Chronic stress can disrupt digestion. Practices that support nervous system regulation such as deep breathing, gentle movement, or time outdoors can positively impact gut function.

2. Prioritize Sleep

Sleep plays a key role in digestive regulation. Consistent sleep schedules help support gut rhythm and overall balance.

3. Build Routine Into Your Day

Regular meal timing, movement, and rest signals help the digestive system function more smoothly.

4. Stay Connected to Care

Ongoing digestive symptoms shouldn't be ignored. Healthcare providers can help identify patterns, rule out other conditions, and recommend personalized support.

In addition to lifestyle and nervous system factors, eating patterns and specific food approaches have become central to how people think about gut health. Rather than fad diets, the emphasis is increasingly on evidence-informed ways of eating that support the microbiome, digestion, and long-term balance.

Fiber-Rich Eating

Increasing intake of diverse plant fibers is one of the most consistent trends backed by research. Foods such as:

- > Fruits and vegetables (especially colorful varieties)
- > Beans, lentils, and whole grains
- > Nuts and seeds

These fibers serve as prebiotics, fuel for beneficial gut bacteria, and are linked to improved digestion and metabolic health.

Fermented Foods

Fermented products are becoming mainstream as everyday gut supports, including:

- > Yogurt and kefir
- > Sauerkraut and kimchi
- > Kombucha
- > Miso and tempeh

These foods contain live cultures that may contribute to microbial diversity in the gut.

Diverse Plant Focus vs. Restrictive Diets

Instead of highly restrictive gut diets (like eliminating entire food groups permanently), the trend is toward:

- Diversity over restriction – a wide variety of foods that feed different microbes
- Rotation and personalization – discovering what works for your body rather than one-size-fits-all elimination

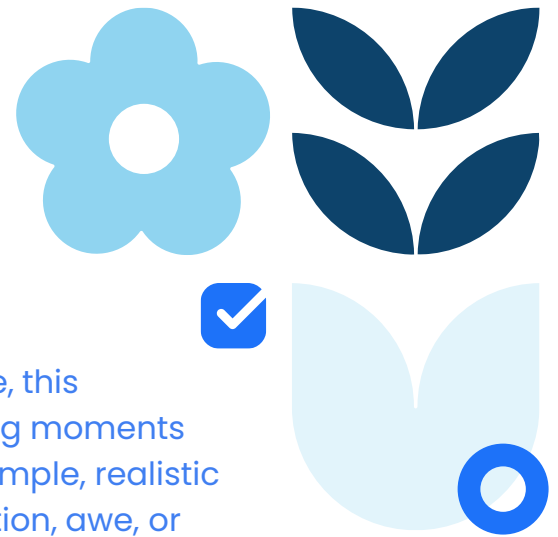
People are increasingly encouraged to notice patterns rather than cut out broad categories without evidence.

Hydration as a Digestive Support

Adequate water intake is being recognized more often as foundational to digestive comfort and regularity. Hydration supports the movement of food through the gut and overall metabolic processes.

Mini Challenge

Earth Day



Instead of starting with action steps or behavior change, this challenge begins with noticing, appreciating, and finding moments of delight in the world around you, then builds toward simple, realistic ways to care for the planet. When people feel appreciation, awe, or enjoyment toward the natural world, they're more likely to value it, protect it and feel motivated to act.

Complete 4 **Gain Appreciation** activities before completing 4 **Act** activities.

Gain Appreciation

- Notice Beauty**
Notice one thing in the natural world that feels genuinely pleasant to see light, color, movement, or texture.
- Tune Into Sound**
Listen for a natural sound today wind, rain, birds, leaves, or even quiet.
- Feel the Elements**
Pay attention to how nature feels on your body — sun, air, warmth, coolness.
- Find Nature Indoors**
Notice plants, natural materials, or daylight inside your space.
- Appreciate Where You Live**
Notice one thing you like about your surroundings — even something small.
- Share a Moment**
Share something you noticed this week with someone else — a photo, a comment, or a quick message.
- Reflect on Delight**
Think about which moment felt the most grounding or enjoyable. That's your personal entry point to connection.

Act

- Reduce One Thing**
Choose one item to use less of today, energy, water, disposables, or consumption.
- Reuse Intentionally**
Reuse something you'd normally throw away or replace.
- Support Local**
Support a local or sustainable option, food, business, or service.
- Care for a Space**
Clean, organize, recycle, or care for a shared or outdoor space.
- Learn One Thing**
Read or watch something short about the environment, climate, or conservation.
- Encourage Care**
Share one earth-friendly habit or idea with someone.
- Choose One Habit to Keep**
Pick one small action from this week that feels doable long-term.

Mini Challenge

Easter Eggs



This week, you're invited to hunt for small moments of good, ease, and joy. There are little "eggs" - small wins, funny moments, tiny sparks of joy, etc. - hiding in plain sight waiting to be found.

Complete this festive mini challenge by choosing 10 "eggs" to hunt for this week. No baskets required.

Hunt for a Win

- ☐ Something you completed
- ☐ A task that went smoother than expected
- ☐ A problem you solved
- ☐ A moment you handled better than you used to

Hunt for a Smile

- ☐ A funny moment
- ☐ A kind interaction
- ☐ Something unexpectedly pleasant
- ☐ A moment of laughter or lightness

Hunt for Ease

- ☐ A shortcut or helpful tool
- ☐ Someone who lightened your load
- ☐ A meeting that ended early
- ☐ A decision that didn't need overthinking

Hunt for Gratitude

- ☐ A person
- ☐ A moment
- ☐ A resource
- ☐ A part of your routine you usually overlook

Hunt for Fun

- ☐ Something that sparks joy
- ☐ Something that excites you about spring
- ☐ Something unexpectedly delightful
- ☐ A really good snack