Seasons of Wellbeing

Rest Your Relationships

Relationships are one of the greatest contributors to wellbeing, but they can also become a source of stress when life gets busy, expectations grow, or meaningful connection takes a backseat. This month, explore practical ways to strengthen your support system, create healthy boundaries, and build relationships that leave you feeling energized instead of depleted.

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Curated Finds to Help You

Rest Your Relationships

Mental Health Minute

Watch this month's *Mental Health Minute* with Catherine Van Tassell.

Watch Now ▶

Community Corner

The Human Connection Project

A nonprofit resource focused on combating loneliness and fostering meaningful relationships through simple connection practices. Here you can find inclusive art projects and social engagement in your community.

Media Picks

READ

Platonic: How the Science of Attachment Can Help You Make and Keep Friends
by Dr. Marisa G. Franco, PhD

A research-based look at the importance of friendship and practical ways to cultivate stronger social connections throughout adulthood. Dr. Franco answers: "how do we make and keep friends in an era of distraction, burnout, and chaos, especially in a society that often prizes romantic love at the expense of other relationships?"

WATCH

TED Talk: The Secret to Living Longer May Be Your Social Life *by Susan Pinker (16 min)*

An engaging look at the powerful connection between social relationships and our long-term health.

LISTEN

Why Being Alone Might Be Better Than You Think *The Happiness Lab with Dr. Laurie Santos (46 min)*

Many people view time alone as something to avoid, but solitude can offer important benefits for wellbeing. In this episode of The Happiness Lab, Dr. Laurie Santos explores the difference between loneliness and healthy alone time, highlighting how moments of solitude can support reflection, recovery, creativity, and emotional wellbeing.

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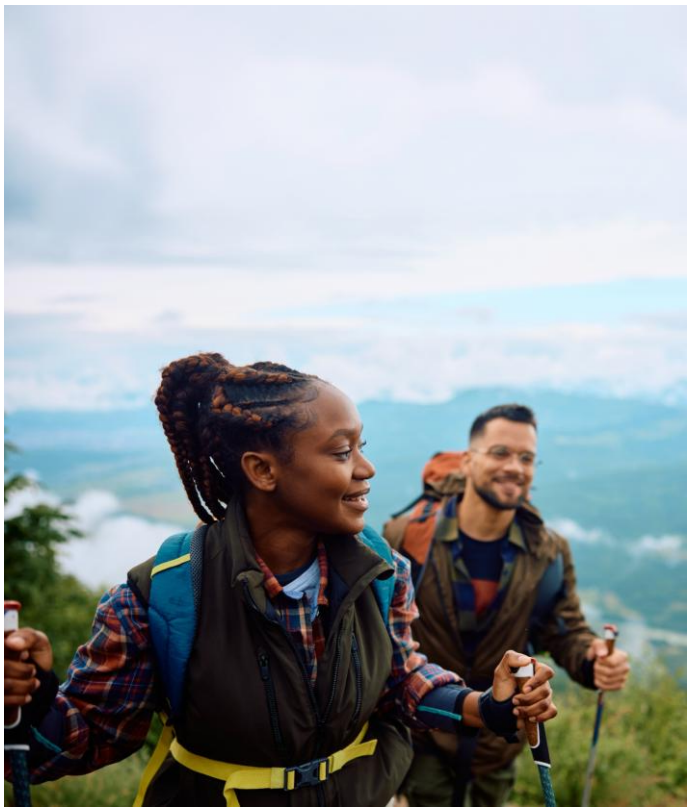
Newsletter

The Power of Healthy Space

Most people think healthy relationships require more communication, more time together, and more effort. While connection is important, there is another ingredient that often gets overlooked: space.

Healthy relationships are not built by being available every moment of every day. They are built through trust, respect, and understanding. Just as our minds and bodies need time to recharge, relationships often benefit from breathing room too.



Today's technology makes it possible to stay connected at all times. Text messages, social media, email, and video calls allow us to reach one another instantly. While this can be beneficial, it has also created new expectations. Many people feel pressure to respond immediately, maintain constant contact, attend every event, and stay involved in everyone's lives.

Over time, these expectations can become exhausting.

Even positive relationships require time, attention, emotional energy, and mental bandwidth. When life becomes especially busy, trying to meet every social expectation can leave us feeling stretched thin and overwhelmed.

The Myth of Constant Connection

Many people assume that if communication slows down, something must be wrong. A delayed text message, canceled plans, or a season of less frequent contact can sometimes create worry or guilt. In reality, strong relationships often have room for life's natural ups and downs.

Healthy relationships can withstand busy schedules, changing priorities, family obligations, work demands, and personal challenges. (Continued.)

They do not require constant maintenance to remain meaningful. In fact, expecting ourselves or others to be constantly available can place unnecessary strain on relationships. The healthiest connections often allow people to step back when needed and reconnect when they have the capacity to do so.

Why Space Can Strengthen Relationships

Space allows people to maintain their individuality, recharge emotionally, and focus on other areas of life that require attention.

Creating healthy space can help:

- Reduce feelings of overwhelm
- Prevent resentment and burnout
- Encourage independence and self-care
- Improve the quality of time spent together
- Create more realistic expectations
- Support healthier communication

When people feel trusted rather than monitored, relationships often become stronger and more sustainable.

Extending Grace to Others

Just as we hope others will be understanding when life becomes busy, the people around us often need that same patience and flexibility. Healthy relationships recognize that everyone has limits, responsibilities, and changing circumstances.

Extending grace may look like:

- Understanding delayed responses
- Respecting personal boundaries
- Letting go of unrealistic expectations
- Allowing people time to recharge
- Recognizing that connection can look different during different seasons of life

Rather than measuring relationships by frequency of contact, consider focusing on the quality of your interactions and the trust that exists between them.

Not every relationship challenge requires more effort or more time. Sometimes the healthiest thing we can do is create a little more space. Giving relationships room to breathe can help them remain strong, meaningful, and sustainable for years to come.

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Why Relationship Energy Matters

Not every relationship affects us the same way. Some leave us feeling encouraged, supported, and energized. Others may feel draining, stressful, or one-sided. Creating healthy space doesn't mean withdrawing from the people you care about. It means recognizing your limits, giving yourself permission to recharge, and building relationships that are sustainable during every season of life.

Are You Carrying Relationship Pressure?

Sometimes stress comes less from our relationships themselves and more from the pressure we feel surrounding them.

Consider whether any of the following sound familiar:

- ☐ I feel guilty saying no to requests or invitations.
- ☐ I worry about disappointing others.
- ☐ I feel pressure to respond to messages immediately.

- ☐ I struggle to balance time for others with time for myself.
- ☐ I often agree to commitments before considering my capacity.
- ☐ I feel responsible for keeping every relationship active.

- ☐ I have difficulty asking for space when I need it.
- ☐ I continue social obligations even when I'm feeling overwhelmed.

If you checked several boxes, you may benefit from creating a little more breathing room in your relationships. Continue to the next page for a Relationship Reflection activity.

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Relationship Reflection

Think about the people in your life and write down:

Someone who helps me feel supported: _____

_____

Someone I enjoy spending time with: _____

_____

A relationship I'd like to strengthen: _____

_____

A relationship boundary I'd like to maintain: _____

_____

Someone I haven't connected with recently: _____

_____

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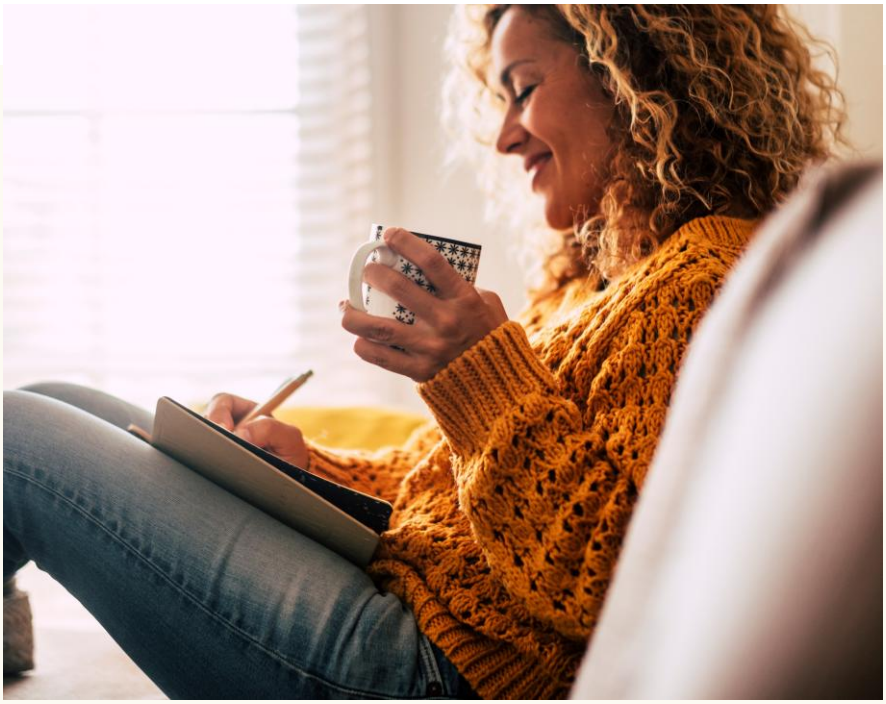
Trend Talk

Social Recovery



For years, conversations about wellness have focused on physical recovery through sleep, exercise, and nutrition. More recently, attention has expanded to include mental recovery through mindfulness, stress management, and self-care practices. Now, a growing number of wellness experts are highlighting another important piece of the puzzle: social recovery.

What Is Social Recovery?

Social recovery refers to the process of restoring the energy we use during social interaction. Every conversation, meeting, phone call, text message, and social commitment requires a certain amount of attention and emotional energy. While meaningful relationships are important for wellbeing, connection still requires effort.

Just as a muscle needs time to recover after a workout, our social energy often needs time to recharge after periods of high interaction.

This does not mean there is anything wrong with spending time with others. It simply recognizes that people have limits and that everyone benefits from opportunities to reset.

Why Social Recovery Is Getting Attention

Today's world creates more opportunities for connection than ever before. Between email, messaging apps, video calls, social media, and smartphones, many people remain connected throughout the day.

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While technology has made communication easier, it has also increased the number of interactions we manage on a daily basis. The result is that many people spend much of their time engaged with others, even when they are physically alone.

As awareness of burnout and capacity continues to grow, people are beginning to recognize that constant connection can sometimes make recovery more difficult.

Signs You May Need Social Recovery

Social recovery looks different for everyone, but some common signs include:

- Feeling drained after a busy week of interactions
- Wanting quiet time after social events
- Becoming easily irritated or impatient
- Struggling to stay engaged in conversations
- Feeling overwhelmed by messages, calls, or notifications
- Craving time alone or uninterrupted personal time

Experiencing these feelings occasionally is completely normal. In many cases, they are simply signals that your social battery could use a recharge.

What Social Recovery Can Look Like

Social recovery does not require complete isolation or avoiding people. Instead, it may involve creating opportunities to lower stimulation and restore your energy.

Examples include:

- Taking a walk by yourself
- Reading or pursuing a hobby
- Spending time in nature
- Turning off notifications for a period
- Protecting personal downtime
- Enjoying quiet moments without multitasking
- Choosing quality interactions over quantity

The goal is not to disconnect from others permanently. The goal is to create enough space to show up more fully when you do connect.

Finding Your Balance

Wellbeing is not about choosing between connection and solitude. Both play important roles in a healthy life. Relationships provide support, belonging, and shared experiences. Recovery provides the space needed to recharge and maintain those relationships over time.

Just as our physical and mental wellbeing depend on periods of activity and rest, our social wellbeing benefits from balancing connection with recovery.

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Clinical Check-In

Headaches & Migraines

Headaches are among the most common health complaints and can affect people of all ages. While occasional headaches are often manageable with rest, hydration, or stress reduction, recurring headaches and migraines can significantly impact daily activities, work performance, and quality of life.

A headache is a symptom that can have many causes, while migraine is a neurological condition that may cause recurring episodes of head pain along with other symptoms such as nausea or sensitivity to light and sound.

Understanding the differences between headaches and migraines can help you recognize symptoms, identify triggers, and discuss concerns with your healthcare provider.

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What Are the Most Common Types?

Tension Headaches

Often described as a dull ache or feeling of pressure around the head. These are the most common type of headache and are frequently associated with stress, muscle tension, poor posture, or fatigue.

Migraines

A neurological condition that can cause moderate to severe throbbing or pulsing pain, often on one side of the head. Migraines may occur with nausea, sensitivity to light or sound, and visual changes known as aura.

Cluster Headaches

Less common but often very painful headaches that tend to occur in cycles or clusters, usually around one eye or one side of the head.

Common Headache & Migraine Triggers

Keeping track of symptoms and possible triggers may help you identify patterns over time.

Triggers vary from person to person, but common examples include:

- Stress and emotional tension
- Poor sleep or changes in sleep schedules
- Dehydration
- Skipping meals
- Excessive caffeine or caffeine withdrawal
- Hormonal changes
- Bright lights or loud noises
- Extended screen time
- Certain foods or beverages

Common Headache Symptoms

Headaches can present in a variety of ways depending on the type and underlying cause. Common symptoms often include a dull, aching pain, a feeling of pressure or tightness around the head, and tension in the neck or shoulders.

Many people experience mild to moderate discomfort that can interfere with concentration, productivity, or daily activities but is typically manageable with rest or other self-care measures.

Common Migraine Symptoms

Migraines are often more intense and can involve symptoms beyond head pain. People experiencing a migraine may develop moderate to severe pain that is often described as throbbing or pulsing.

Migraines may also be accompanied by nausea or vomiting, increased sensitivity to light, sound, or certain smells, visual disturbances known as aura, and difficulty concentrating. Symptoms can last for several hours or even days and may significantly impact daily function.

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Questions to Ask Your Provider

If headaches or migraines are affecting your daily life, consider asking:

- What type of headache am I experiencing?
- Could my symptoms be related to migraine?
- Are there triggers that may be contributing to my symptoms?
- Should I track my headaches or keep a symptom journal?
- What treatment options may help prevent or manage headaches?
- Are my medications contributing to headaches?
- When should I seek additional evaluation or testing?
- What lifestyle changes may help reduce headache frequency?

When to Seek Medical Care

A healthcare provider can help determine the cause of symptoms and discuss appropriate treatment options.

Seek prompt medical attention if a headache:

- Is sudden and extremely severe
- Occurs after a head injury
- Is accompanied by confusion, weakness, or difficulty speaking
- Includes vision changes that are unusual
- Is significantly different from previous headaches

While not all headaches can be prevented, healthy habits can help reduce the frequency and severity of symptoms. Staying hydrated, prioritizing sleep, managing stress, eating regular meals, and identifying personal triggers may all play a role in supporting headache health.

Headaches and migraines are common, but ongoing symptoms should not be ignored. Understanding your patterns and working with your healthcare provider can help you find strategies that support long-term wellbeing.

Mini Challenge

Embrace the Pace of Fall

Fall offers a natural reminder to slow down, reflect, and make space for what matters most. Challenge yourself to embrace the calmer pace of the season by completing activities that encourage rest, presence, and intentional living. **Complete 10 activities this month to embrace the pace of fall.**

- [ ] Take a 15-minute walk outdoors and notice the signs of fall.
- [ ] Enjoy a warm beverage without multitasking.
- [ ] Read a book, magazine, or article for 20 minutes.
- [ ] Spend an evening with reduced screen time.
- [ ] Write down three things you're grateful for.
- [ ] Listen to calming music during your commute or break.
- [ ] Take a lunch break away from your desk.
- [ ] Get at least seven hours of sleep.
- [ ] Call or visit someone you enjoy spending time with.
- [ ] Spend 10 minutes stretching or practicing gentle movement.
- [ ] Decline a commitment that exceeds your capacity.
- [ ] Prepare a comforting fall-inspired meal or snack.
- [ ] Take a walk without your phone or other distractions.
- [ ] Spend time on a hobby you enjoy.
- [ ] Eat one meal without screens or distractions.
- [ ] Reflect on one thing you can let go of this month.
- [ ] Write a note of appreciation to someone who has made a difference in your life.
- [ ] Make time for an activity simply because it brings you joy.

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Harvest Grain Bowl

Serves 4

Ingredients

For the bowls:

- 1 cup uncooked farro, brown rice, or quinoa
- 2 cups Brussels sprouts, halved
- 2 cups butternut squash, cubed
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 can (15 ounces) chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- ¼ cup pumpkin seeds
- 4 cups mixed greens

For the dressing:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- Pinch of salt and pepper

Directions

1. Cook the grain according to package instructions and set aside.
2. Preheat oven to 425°F.
3. Toss Brussels sprouts and butternut squash with olive oil, salt, and pepper. Spread on a baking sheet and roast for 20–25 minutes, stirring halfway through.
4. In a small bowl, whisk together dressing ingredients.
5. Divide mixed greens among four containers or bowls. Top with cooked grain, roasted vegetables, chickpeas, cranberries, and pumpkin seeds.
6. Drizzle with dressing before serving.