Why Social Interactions are Important for Self-Care

Numerous studies indicate a direct correlation between the level of social interaction and mental and physical health. Surprisingly, even highly-social people with poor habits like smoking and inactivity were found to outlive less social people who practiced a healthier lifestyle. These consistent research findings from several studies make it impossible to ignore the importance of a strong social network as a required prerequisite to a long and healthy life.

**Health Benefits of a Socially Active Life**

There have been many studies that look at the health benefits of being more social. Thinking about it logically – it makes sense. When you socialize with other people, you have validation for your own feelings, someone to talk to when you need to, and emotional support on both ends. You not only support them when they need it, but they can support you as well. This is a wonderful thing for everyone involved, making it important to be as social as you can, even if you are more of an introverted personality.

**Negative Physical Consequences of Loneliness**

Neuroscientist, John Cacioppo discussed his research findings reported in his latest book, Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection. Predictable negative physical results coincide with loneliness to compromise health. Stress hormones are higher accompanied by a lower functioning immune system and heart function. Premature aging represents yet another unfortunate side effect of loneliness.

Additionally, people suffering from loneliness demonstrated more bad habits that only added to health problems. Lonely people drink more and sleep less. This group also tends to eat less healthy and overindulge in fatty foods.

**Mental Problems Associated with Low Social Activity Levels**

Depression is a significant problem that isolated people endure. This group of people often experience serious mental health problems associated with higher stress levels and a lack of meaning in their life. It is common for mental health to deteriorate even more if the isolation continues, undermining self-esteem and a sense of purpose for being alive.

**Communities at Risk**

Obvious high-risk community segments are senior citizens, chronically ill people and people who lose a spouse through divorce or death. While there are groups of people with circumstances who may temporarily fall into an isolated lifestyle briefly through unemployment or a move to a new area, older people represent one of the most vulnerable groups at risk for isolation due to inevitable changes in their life and health. The more people recognize this reality, the better the chances for avoiding the isolation that can lead to unhappiness and worsening overall health.

The studies are conclusive. We are social creatives that can only thrive by interacting with other people. It is incumbent for all people to make the effort to stay social and engage with others even when it may be easier to isolate. Since loneliness can be the start of a downward spiral health-wise, recognizing the necessity for reaching out to others for help is crucial. While the internet offers one opportunity for outreach, there is no substitute for face-to-face interactions.