

# The Foundation for Social Connection

# Valentine's Day

## Heartfelt Ways to Connect

Romantic relationships may take the spotlight on Valentine's Day, but social connection extends far beyond romance. Friendships, family bonds, and community ties can be just as fulfilling and essential to our well-being.

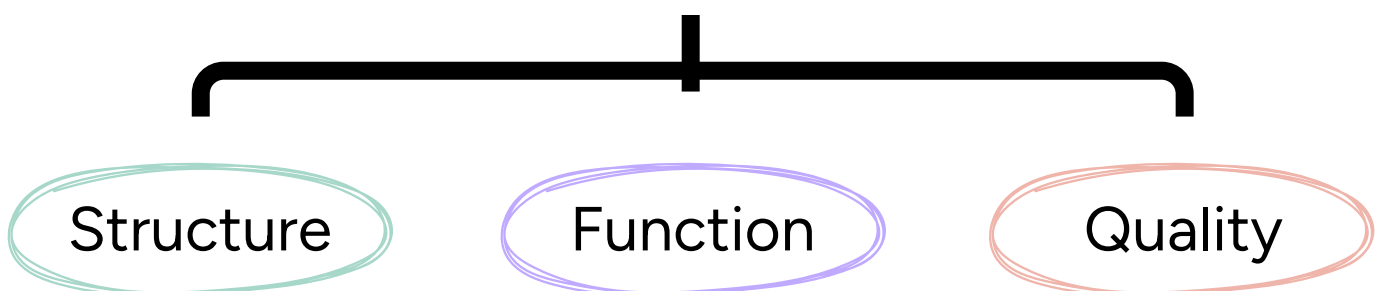
That's why today, instead of focusing on a special someone, we're providing tips and resources to support the three key components of social connection—structure, function, and quality—so you can foster deeper, more meaningful relationships in all aspects of your life this Valentine's Day and beyond.

### Reimagine Relationships



Watch award-winning journalist and author Rhaina Cohen's TED Talk, **Why Friendship Can Be Just As Meaningful As Romantic Love**, where she explores the power of deep friendships and why some people are choosing friends as life partners.

## The Three Vital Components of Social Connection



# Structure

## The number and variety of relationships, and the frequency of interactions

Over the past **two decades**, we have come to spend significantly less time with others and more time alone. Make it a priority to cultivate new connections and nurture existing relationships through activities like movie or craft nights, shared meals, or FaceTime catch-ups. [Bonus points for making the activities a regular occurrence!] Even something as quick and simple as sending a "thinking of you" text can go a long way. Taking these actions to engage with others can help rebuild social routines and create new opportunities for meaningful connection.

### Check It Out!



The Foundation for Social Connection teamed up with Hinge for their **One More Hour** initiative to encourage in-person community engagement and help build stronger, more supportive social circles for our loneliest generation—Gen Z. Listen to **this NPR interview** where one Gen Zer shares how joining a surf club, which received funding support by the initiative, helped her find a new source of belonging and confidence. If you're interested in starting or deepening the impact of your own social club, stay tuned for a new resource coming soon! ••

### Grab the Popcorn



As awareness of our loneliness epidemic grows, more films and shows are shining a light on the power of social connection. Check out the documentary **Join or Die**, exploring Dr. Robert Putnam's research on community engagement, or **Man on the Inside**, a heartwarming TV comedy about a retired widow finding new purpose and connection later in life.

# Function

## The degree to which relationships serve various needs

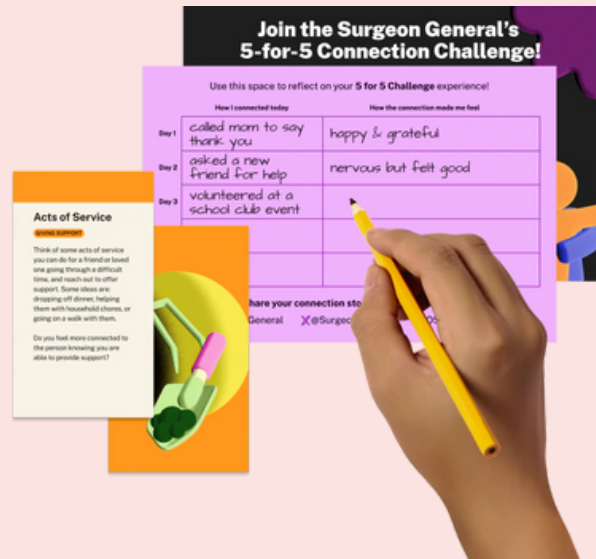
Our friends, family, and partners each play an important role in our lives, offering support in different ways. However, connecting with your community through acts of service can also offer a powerful source of belonging and meaning, as research shows volunteering provides volunteers with a strong sense of purpose and connection. Another way to expand your support system is by joining social clubs related to your various interests, like a book club, sports team, or creative group. By engaging in diverse interactions and relationships that fulfill different aspects of our lives—whether emotional, social, or intellectual—we create a more well-rounded and supportive network.

# Quality

The degree to which interactions and relationships are positive and satisfying

Building and maintaining strong, high-quality relationships takes effort as they shift and grow alongside us. Setting intentional goals—like improving communication, making time for each other, or expressing gratitude—can help deepen our connections. And if a relationship no longer supports your well-being, it's okay to step back and focus on those that do. Choosing to nurture meaningful interactions allows us to foster relationships that bring positivity and fulfillment to our lives.

## Challenge Yourself



Take the Surgeon General's **5-for-5 Connection Challenge** and commit to completing five simple actions over five days—expressing gratitude, offering support, or asking for help—to strengthen your relationships.



If you are experiencing social isolation or loneliness, or would like to explore more social connection resources, please visit the [Foundation's Resource Library](#).

# Happy Valentine's Day!

