
Interacting with others

Good social relationships have a positive influence on wellbeing and longevity at all ages.

Opening up to others can counter feelings of isolation, stress and lack of support which also affect our bodies both short and long term.

Society and longevity

The past two centuries have seen the life expectancy of a baby grow from less than 40 years to over 80 years.

Increasing longevity is much more than a health and medical success story. It reflects how our societies have matured to grow infrastructure (such as roads, sewers, hospitals) and build capabilities such as education, laws, and information sharing. Longer lives also lead to benefits from sharing wisdom.

It's not all gain. Our 'new' societies have created major concerns, such as anxiety. Noted social researcher Hugh Mackay believes anxiety is an 'epidemic that affects us all' and identifies a range of causes. In *'Australia Reimagined'* he suggests that many positive responses come from our ability to identify and achieve better social solutions – interacting with others.

A stronger sense of our own identity is a key factor in interacting well with others. Poor social connectivity has a similar longevity impact as smoking, obesity, and lack of physical activity.

Taking Action

To improve our own relationships, we can look at the nature of our contacts with family, friends and others we interact with and rely on. The wider and more balanced the better.

How deep is each relationship?

- Do our contacts understand us well?
- Can we rely on them?
- Can we open up to them?

What strains the relationship?

- Do they criticise us?
- Do they let us down?
- Do they get on our nerves?

As well as looking at others, we should also take a closer look at ourselves.

There is no 'right' combination. Each of us is different and our choices will vary with our situation, our willingness to act and our confidence in who we are.

Having a Longevity Plan is a big step towards strengthening our own sense of identity. It helps us to frame who we are and why, and to identify important steps and characteristics of the rest of our life that we can respond to.

And since what influences our longevity also affects our quality of life, there is a lot of incentive to take action! Your Longevity Plan helps take control of your longevity including managing your interactions with others.