

The Greatest Threat to Men's Health? Loneliness

Blame the wife and kids. Blame the job or retirement. Blame social distancing. No matter what the reasons are, too many men tend to distance themselves from friends as they grow older.

While it may sound harmless, not maintaining relationships can be dangerous to your overall health and wellbeing.

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That college buddy? Haven't seen him since we graduated. My best man? He got married and never goes out. I stopped playing poker after I got married. I stopped playing golf when the kids were born. I stopped ... having friends.

If that sounds like you, you're not alone. Well, you feel like you are, but there are lots of men in exactly the same situation. Roughly one out of every five men over the age of 65 lives alone.

Loneliness can kill you.

The long-term dangers of loneliness rank right up there with smoking. Studies have shown that social isolation, loneliness, and living alone can increase your odds of dying prematurely by up to 32%. Loneliness is associated with a higher risk of Alzheimer's, obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, and stroke.

“Keep in mind that while loneliness can have many deleterious effects, social support appears to buffer against the harmful effects of chronic stress, and may have additional positive effects on its own,” said Firdaus Dhabhar, Ph.D., professor in the departments of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Microbiology and Immunology, and the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, part of the University of Miami Health System.

Relationships take effort.

Maintaining friendships involves communicating, planning, and dealing with various personalities and differences. Spending time with friends may involve multiple phone calls or group text conversations. Sure, it's easier to just stay home and watch TV. But being alone can't have the same positive impact on your mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing. Plus, it's not nearly as enjoyable.



After your kids grow up and move out, following retirement or the loss of a partner, you may realize you're suddenly alone. While this feeling can be overwhelming, the act of reconnecting with old friends or meeting new ones doesn't have to be. You might be surprised to find out that your old buddies are feeling the same way. They may be waiting for someone to take that first step and reach out.

Most friendships can pick up right where they left off. Maybe you still share the same hobbies and interests. Find common ground and make plans. A simple conversation and a few laughs over a beer or coffee can raise both of your spirits, lower your blood pressure, and help pave the way for a meaningful relationship.

Don't ignore the proven benefits of connecting with others. There are plenty of excuses to avoid that phone call or sending a text to check in with an old friend or colleague. But the rewards of making an effort are worth it — for everyone involved.

Call **305-689-2636** for an appointment.

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