

# Keeping connected with your community



Staying connected with your community gives you a support network and a sense of belonging. Feeling like you belong is a basic human need that affects your physical and mental health. Research shows a feeling of belonging is helpful for managing stress ([Psych Today 2019](#)).

Social connectedness can also create trust and resilience within communities. However, social patterns have changed over the years. People move more than in the past. This means it is not unusual to lose your community connections.

Retirement, relocation, death of a loved one, and health problems are examples of losses which change your sense of connection. It's important to find a way of reconnecting. Studies have shown social connection matters as much as diet and exercise for good health ([UNC 2016](#)).

# Start with who you know

Connecting with your community can start with those you already know and like. This can be family, friends, neighbours, and people you're in regular contact with when out on errands.

If you're in the habit of not contacting friends and acquaintances, make the effort to get in touch the next time you think of someone. If you're in distant places, organise a time to catch up for a phone call.

A friendly text message can lift your mood when you feel lonely. Talking with a friend to catch up, banter or tell them you're thinking of them can [reduce stress](#) and make your day better.



## Developing new connections

[Connections Matter](#) is a helpful booklet from Beyond Blue that offers ideas for staying socially connected when you're over 60. It has a planning guide and recommends starting small with something in your comfort zone. For example:

- **Chatting and catching up** – Stopping for a chat when you're out and about, talking on the phone or chatting online with other people.
- **Activities and interests** – There's a club, society, or interest group for almost anything you can think of. Online interest groups connect a global community of people who share your interests.

- **Volunteering** – Research has shown that [volunteering](#) for seven days can make you happy ([JSP 2018](#)). The study also found that the more you do for others, the bigger the boost to your health and satisfaction with life.
- **Going out to community events** – For example:
  - Local markets, fetes and festivals
  - [Library](#) and cultural events like exhibitions
  - Sporting events and local government activities

Finding a new interest is a good way of keeping connected with your community. If at first you don't find something you enjoy, remember there are many other opportunities. For more ideas and information, get in touch with one of our helpful team on **1800 951 971**.

## Where to get ideas

We've created a comprehensive list of exercise classes, product suggestions, and local groups.

Take the free, confidential [quiz](#) to see your suggestions. You can also get in touch with one of our helpful team on **1800 951 971**.

Here are some other ways of finding out what's available in your community:

- Check local noticeboards, news, pamphlets and online community information in apps like Facebook.
- Councils often have up-to-date information about groups or programs in your area.
- Check resource centres, like senior centres, libraries, community spaces and cultural centres.
- National Seniors Australia is the largest not-for-profit serving the 50+ population. It has [community branches](#) all over Australia. Branch members discuss community issues, enjoy social events, and hear guest speakers.

Joining a group is an easy way to get out to a local community meeting place for a change of scene. There can be little to no cost involved.

If you get [Commonwealth Home Support Programme](#) (CHSP) services, you may be able to have social support services as part of your personal care package.

## If it's not easy to get out

A few simple processes and products can help you enjoy getting out and about. Learn more about this and the assistive products to help you at [LiveUp Out and about](#).

There are also programs with trained volunteers who can call or visit you for a chat. For example:

- **[The Community Visitors Scheme](#)**. If you receive government funded aged care services you can refer yourself at [Request an Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme](#).

## Connecting with technology

Chatting with family and friends online is a good way of staying connected. Social networking apps and other online tools can help you to connect with communities and groups you're interested in. For example, [ConnectUp](#) is the LiveUp community for sharing tips and ideas.

### If you need help with learning new digital skills

The Australian Government provides quality support at [Be Connected](#). Be Connected provides free courses and resources. The [free lessons](#) are also useful if you have good digital skills and want to support someone who is learning.

To keep up with the latest online safety news and tips, check [Scamwatch](#) and the [Australian Cyber Security Centre](#). Learn more about [cyber security](#).

# More helpful information

If you need more information, take the [LiveUp quiz](#) or get in touch with one of our helpful team on **1800 951 971**.

You can also find more tips and advice by following the links below:

- [Connections matter](#)
- [Good Karma Network](#)
- [Neighbourhood Connect](#)
- [Acts of kindness and compassion](#)
- [The Australian chatty café initiative](#)

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## CONTACT US

**Website:** [liveup.org.au](http://liveup.org.au)

**Email:** [support@liveup.org.au](mailto:support@liveup.org.au)

**Phone:** 1800 951 971

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/LiveUpAus](https://facebook.com/LiveUpAus)

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