

# Health Insights

November 2021



## Social Identification and Health in Organizational Contexts

In a new meta-analysis, psychologists have shown that how strongly we identify with the people or organization where we work is associated with better health and lower burnout.

While many people assume that finding the right job that fits your personality and skills is the key to a healthy work life, this meta-analysis shows that health at work is determined to a large extent by our social relationships in the workplace and, more particularly, the social groups we form.

"This study is the first large-scale analysis showing that organizational identification is related to better health," says lead researcher Dr. Niklas Steffens (University of Queensland, Australia). "These results show that both performance and health are enhanced to the extent that workplaces provide people with a sense of 'we' and 'us.'"

The type of job was not a significant factor in the link between social identification and health benefits, but several other factors influenced the relationship. "Social identification contributes to both psychological and physiological health, but the health benefits are stronger for psychological health," says Steffens. The positive psychological benefit may stem from the support provided by the work group but also the meaning and purpose that people derive from membership in social groups.

"We are less burnt out and have greater well-being when our team and our organization provide us with a sense of belonging and community" summarizes Steffens. The authors also found that the health benefits of identifying with the workplace are strongest when there are similar levels of identification within a group. So, if you identify strongly with your organization, then you get more health benefits if everyone else identifies strongly with the organization too.

The team was surprised to find that the more women there were in a sample, the weaker the identification-health relationship. "This was a finding that we had not predicted, and, in the absence of any prior theorizing, we can only guess what gives rise to this effect," says Steffens. "However, one of the reasons may relate to the fact that we know from other research that there are still many workplaces that have somewhat 'masculine' cultures. This could mean that even when female employees identify with their team or organization, they still feel somewhat more marginal within their team or organization."

The team recommends exploring the role of leadership. This is because other findings that emerge from the same program of research indicate that leaders who manage teams and groups have a strong influence on the social identification-health connection. "Leaders play a key role in shaping a sense of group identity in the workplace," Steffens said, "and this is important not only for team performance but also for the mental and physical health of employees."

Society for Personality and Social Psychology. "Health determined by social relationships at work." ScienceDaily. [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/10/161003214129.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/10/161003214129.htm) (accessed October 19, 2021).



## Association of Social Support with Brain Volume and Cognition

In a recent study, researchers observed that having someone available most or all the time whom you can count on to listen to you when you need to talk is associated with greater cognitive resilience. Many neurologists believe this can be boosted by mentally stimulating activities, physical exercise, and positive social interactions.

"We think of cognitive resilience as a buffer to the effects of brain aging and disease," says lead researcher Joel Salinas, MD. "This study shows that taking steps, either for themselves or the people they care about most, can increase the odds they'll slow down cognitive aging or prevent Alzheimer's disease."

While Alzheimer's usually affects an older population, results indicate that people younger than 65 would benefit from taking stock of their social support. Individuals in their 40s and 50s with low listener availability had a cognitive age that was four years older than those with high listener availability.

"These four years can be incredibly precious. Too often we think about how to protect our brain health when we're much older," says Salinas. Ask yourself if you have someone available to listen to you in a supportive way. Taking that simple action sets the process in motion for you to ultimately have better odds of long-term brain health and the best quality of life.

Salinas recommends that physicians consider adding this question to the standard social history portion of a patient interview: asking patients whether they have access to someone they can count on to listen to them when they need to talk. "Loneliness is one of the symptoms of depression, and has other health implications for patients," says Salinas.

NYU Langone Health / NYU Grossman School of Medicine. "Having a good listener improves your brain health." ScienceDaily. [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/08/210816112101.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/08/210816112101.htm) (accessed October 19, 2021).

# Mental Health Moment

## Effects of Social Skills on Health Through Stress and Loneliness

People who struggle in social situations may be at greater risk for mental and physical health problems, according to a new study from the University of Arizona. Poor social skills can lead to stress and loneliness, which negatively impacts health. "We've known for a long time that social skills are associated with mental health problems like depression and anxiety," said Chris Segrin, head of the UA Department of Communication. "But we've not known definitively that social skills were also predictive of poorer physical health. Two variables – loneliness and stress – appear to be the glue that binds poor social skills to health. People with poor social skills have high levels of stress and loneliness in their lives."

Study participants who were deficient in social skills reported more stress, more loneliness, and poorer overall mental and physical health, Segrin said. While the negative effects of stress on the body have been known for a long time, loneliness is a more recently recognized health risk factor. "Lonely people experience that same sort of frantic search and they don't have the ability to escape from that stress. They're not finding what they're looking for, and that stress of frantically searching takes a toll on them."

University of Arizona. "Poor social skills may be harmful to health." ScienceDaily. [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/11/171106090116.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/11/171106090116.htm) (accessed October 19, 2021).





# Thanksgiving Leftovers Hand Pies

## Ingredient List:

- One 14.1-ounce package store-bought pie crust
- All-purpose flour, for dusting
- ¼ C leftover mashed sweet potatoes
- ½ C leftover stuffing
- ½ C leftover roasted turkey diced into ¼" pieces
- ¼ C leftover cranberry sauce, plus more for dipping
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp. whole milk
- Leftover gravy, for dipping
- *Special equipment:* 4 ½-inch round biscuit cutter

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Roll out the pie crusts with a rolling pin on a lightly floured surface to 1/8 inch thick. Cut out rounds of dough with a 4 1/2-inch round biscuit cutter and transfer them to the prepared baking sheet. Gather and reroll the scraps if necessary; you should have a total of 12 rounds.

Spread 1 teaspoon sweet potato in an even layer over half of each round, leaving a 1/4-inch border around the edge. Top each with 2 teaspoons stuffing, then 2 teaspoons turkey, and finally 1 teaspoon cranberry sauce. (You may redistribute some of the filling among the rounds so all the piles are even.) Whisk together the egg and milk in a small bowl to make an egg wash. Brush the egg wash around the edges of each dough round.

Fold over each dough round to cover the filling, creating 12 half-moon shapes. With your fingers, press the edges together and then press with a fork to seal securely.

Brush the top of each hand pie with the remaining egg wash. Make 3 small slits with a small paring knife on the top of each pie to let the steam escape. Bake until the dough is cooked through and golden brown, about 30 minutes. Serve warm with extra cranberry sauce and gravy on the side for dipping.

Food Network Kitchen. "Thanksgiving Leftovers Hand Pies." Food Network. Food Network, February 3, 2017. <https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/food-network-kitchen/thanksgiving-leftovers-hand-pies-3566077>.

# Social Health Quiz

## *Social Identification and Health in Organizational Contexts*

### 1. What does social identification contribute to?

- a. Psychological and Physiological Health
- b. Physical and Environmental Health
- c. Intellectual and Occupational Health

### 2. We are less burnt out and have \_\_\_\_\_ when our team and our organization provide us with a sense of \_\_\_\_\_.

## *Association of Social Support with Brain Volume and Cognition*

### 3. What age group benefits from taking stock of social support?

- a. 65 and older
- b. Younger than 65
- c. Any age.

### 4. What did the researchers recommend physicians add to their standard patient review?

- a. Asking patients if they have someone they can listen and talk with
- b. Asking if there is a family history of Alzheimer's Disease
- c. Cognitive Assessment

## *Effects of Social Skills on Health Through Stress and Loneliness*

### 5. What did the article find in people with poor social skills?

- a. Lower levels of productivity and engagement
- b. Higher levels of stress and loneliness
- c. None of the above

See page 4 for quiz answers



# Healthy Habits Calendar

## November 2021 - Social Health

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 <b>Happy November!</b> Remember to download the challenge.	2	3 <b>Wellness Wednesday:</b> Set a goal this month to meet someone new.	4	5 <b>Foodie Friday:</b> Try out a local restaurant.	6
7 <b>Self-Care Sunday:</b> Prepare your lunch for tomorrow's workday.	8	9 <b>Tip-Tuesday:</b> Journal about a recent unexpected or surprising event.	10	11 <b>Thirsty Thursday</b> Cut out soda and other sugary drinks today.	12	13 <b>Service Saturday:</b> Reach out to someone you haven't heard from lately.
14	15 <b>Motivation Monday:</b> Start reading a new educational book.	16	17 <b>Workout Wednesday:</b> Work out with a friend.	18 <b>Challenge Check-in:</b> What conversation helped better a relationship?	19 <b>Fitness Friday:</b> Enjoy the fall air and go for a hike or walk.	20
21 <b>Stretching Sunday:</b> Stretch for 10 mins in the morning.	22	23 <b>Tip-Tuesday:</b> Write down 5 things that bring you joy.	24	25 <b>Happy Thanksgiving!</b> Share how grateful you are with those close to you.	26	27 <b>Selfie Saturday:</b> Take a photo while doing an activity that betters your wellbeing.
28 <b>Happy Hanukkah!</b>	29 <b>Meditation Monday:</b> End your day with 10 mins of meditation.	30				

### Answers to Quiz:

Q1: a. Psychological and Physiological Health | Q2: greater well-being / belonging and community | Q3: b. Younger than 65  
Q4: a. Asking patients if they have someone they can listen and talk with | Q5: b. Higher levels of stress and loneliness



# Challenge: Tough Talks

## 30 Day Challenge:

This month, have at least one tough talk each week. Tough talks are inevitable in each of our lives, and will continually pop up in the workplace or at home. Despite the frequency of these conversations, most people are terrified of confrontation. It is easy to convince ourselves that it is simpler to avoid those tough conversations. However, we will be mentally and physically healthier if we can learn to approach these hard talks in the right way. By the end of this challenge you will have greater peace, trust, and growth and be a more developed person.

### Week 1

When did you have a tough talk this week?

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

### Week 2

When did you have a tough talk this week?

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

### Week 3

When did you have a tough talk this week?

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

### Week 4

When did you have a tough talk this week?

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	