BUILD SUPPORTIVE CONNECTIONS

Social connection is an important part of health and well-being. As one of the **ACE 7 Core Drivers of Healthy Living™**, Build Supportive Connections focuses on cultivating positive relationships, community, and belonging that can support health and healthy behaviors.

Why This Matters

Social isolation and loneliness are related, but different:

SOCIAL ISOLATION
having few relationships, limited contact with others, or little social support.

LONELINESS
the feeling of being alone or disconnected and can occur even when other people are present.

Loneliness and social isolation don't have a single cause. Reporting from The World Health Organization indicates that health challenges, financial strain, living alone, limited community resources and digital habits can all play a role. For young people in particular, excessive screen time and negative online experiences may take a toll on mental health and well-being.

Research suggests that movement can help people connect with others, build supportive relationships, and create a sense of belonging.

KEY CONCEPTS

Movement can bring people together



Group exercise, walking groups, sports, small-group training, and other shared activities can bring people together around common interests. Fitness settings can also serve as a "third space"—somewhere outside of home and work where people can spend time and socialize with others.

Belonging requires more than being together



Simply being around other people does not guarantee meaningful connection. Creating experiences where people feel welcomed, supported, valued, and included can help foster a sense of belonging. Small, repeated moments of recognition and connection can be enough to foster belonging, even without developing deep relationships.

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KEY CONCEPTS, CONTINUED

Connection is personal

Social support around physical activity may also come from sharing goals with others, receiving encouragement, or simply talking with someone about an activity or workout. Movement can facilitate connection even when the activity itself is performed independently. Interests, abilities, access, life circumstances, and individual preferences can all influence what meaningful connection feels like.

For Exercise and Health Professionals

Exercise and health professionals can intentionally create inclusive environments and shape experiences and interactions that support connection and belonging.

Create Connection Through RRAMP™

The ACE RRAMP Approach™ offers five practical ways to shape experiences and interactions that can strengthen connection and belonging:

RESPECT	Help people feel welcomed.
RECOGNITION	Acknowledge effort and self-improvement.
ALIGNMENT	Encourage cooperation rather than comparison.
MISTAKES	Reinforce that experiences, positive or negative, are a part of learning.
PARTICIPANT	Help every person feel that their participation matters.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- Offer modifications and options that make participation more accessible.
- Help clients find opportunities for connection through activities they already enjoy.
- Help clients identify forms of connection that feel meaningful and realistic for them.

Developed in collaboration with the ACE Scientific Advisory Panel
Based on ACE's "Exercise, Loneliness and Social Isolation: How Movement Can Foster Connection and Belonging" educational feature.

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Help Clients Find Their Fit

Connection is personal. Help clients explore ways of connecting with others that feel meaningful, comfortable, and realistic for them.



FOR ACE PROS

To put these ideas into practice, you can use The Social Connections Menu of Options to help clients identify meaningful activities, consider importance and confidence, anticipate barriers, and turn a chosen activity into an achievable plan.

The Takeaway

Movement can support more than physical health. By creating welcoming, inclusive experiences and guiding people toward meaningful opportunities to connect, exercise and health professionals can foster connection and belonging.

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