

## Is Something Missing?

### Reclaiming stable friendships in a destabilized world.

Life is always full of ups and downs, but sometimes it can feel more rollercoaster-y than others. With one curveball after another the past few years, we've had to make frequent adjustments to keep calm (or not) and carry on.

Rolling with the punches during and post-pandemic has come at a cost to our social connections.

- 1 in 3 Americans reported heightened loneliness during the pandemic.
- Nearly 1 out of 5 US adults report having lost touch with most of their friends.

### Why So Low, Friends?

Shrinking social circles were understandable during the pandemic, given the need to shelter at home and practice social distancing. But, surprisingly, the quality and quantity of our friendships began to decline as far back as 1990, long before COVID-19.

Experts theorize that broad structural changes may be playing an ongoing and significant role. We're working more and traveling and living more broadly. We're spending more time with our kids at the expense of outside relationships. We're also making most of our friends at work vs. in our communities over shared interests.

Individually, any of those changes can be a good thing, but together they give us a smaller pool for finding friends and less time to nurture relationships.

## 少了什麼東西嗎？

在不穩定的世界中重新建立穩固的友誼

生活總是充滿起起伏伏，但有時候它可能比其他時候更像坐雲霄飛車。在過去幾年裡，一波又一波的變化使我們不得不經常做出調整，保持冷靜（或者不冷靜）並繼續前行。

在疫情期間和疫情後期，我們忙於應對困境，也付出了犧牲社交生活的代價。

- 在疫情期間，三分之一的美國人報告感到更加孤獨。
- 近五分之一的美國成年人表示與大部分朋友失去聯繫。

### 為什麼朋友減少了？

在疫情期間，因為我們需要待在家中並保持社交距離，社交圈的縮小是可以理解的。但令人驚訝的是，我們的友誼的質素和數量在早在1990年就開始下降了，遠在COVID-19 之前。

專家認為，廣泛的結構性變化可能一直在起著重要作用。我們工作更多，旅行和居住範圍更廣。我們花更多時間陪伴孩子，卻犧牲了外部的人際關係。我們也更多地在工作中交友，而不是在社區中通過共同興趣結交朋友。

單獨看來，這些變化中的任何一個都可能是好事，但綜合起來，它們使我們減少了交友的機會，並減少了培養關係的時間。



### Friendship Matters.

Genuine friendships have a profound impact on our lives, providing obvious benefits like making us happier, supporting us through challenges, providing a sense of security and belonging, and nourishing our minds and souls.

The impact of having at least a few good friends goes beyond the obvious, though. Science has long supported surprising connections between strong social relationships and overall wellbeing.

#### Physical

Quality friendships can reduce risk factors that affect long-term health, like blood pressure, inflammation, and even our waist size.

#### Emotional

Friends boost endorphins and self-esteem, minimize the impact of stress, and help us bounce back from tough emotions like grief and anger.

#### Mental

Supportive and engaged conversations with friends improve brain function and may even offer protection from cognitive decline as we age.

### Fear Not, Friends. There Is Hope.

The friendship news isn't all doom and gloom. Despite the decline in connection overall, most of us still report having a best friend, if not a few close friends.

The pandemic also helped us to realize the things that are truly important. Losing touch with friends was a powerful reminder of their true worth.

As the saying goes, "You never know what you've got 'til it's gone." Well, now we know, and that's driving a surge in the urge for reconnection.

### How to (Re)Connect the Friendship Dots.

Like everything else in life, the more attention we give our friendships, the stronger they'll grow. Here are some ideas for (re)building friendship connections.

### 友誼至關重要

真誠的友誼對我們的生活有深遠的影響，帶來顯而易見的好處，如讓我們更快樂、在面臨挑戰時支持我們、提供安全感和歸屬感，還滋養我們的心靈。

然而，擁有至少幾個好朋友的影響超越了明顯的範疇。科學長期以來一直支持著強大的社交關係與整體健康之間的驚人聯繫。

#### 身體健康

高質素的友誼可以減少影響長期健康的風險因素，如血壓、發炎甚至腰圍大小。

#### 情緒狀況

朋友能夠增加內啡肽和自尊心，減輕壓力的影響，幫助我們從悲傷和憤怒等強烈情緒中恢復過來。

#### 心理健康

與朋友進行支持和參與的交談可以改善腦功能，甚至在我們年齡增長時提供認知衰退的保護。

### 別懼怕，朋友們。還有希望。

關於友誼的消息並非全是悲觀和沮喪。儘管整體上人際連接有所減少，我們大多數人仍然報告擁有至少一個最好的朋友，如果不是幾個親密的朋友。

疫情也幫助我們意識到真正重要的事物。與朋友失去聯繫是他們真正價值的有力提醒。

正如諺語所說："失去後才知道珍貴"。現在我們知道了，這正推動著重新建立連結的浪潮。

### 如何(重新)建立友誼的聯繫

就像生活中的其他事物一樣，我們給予友誼的關注越多，它們就會變得更加牢固。以下是一些建立（或重新建立）友誼聯繫的建議。

**Take the first step:** If you've been thinking a lot about an old friend, chances are they've been thinking about you, too. Reach out with a simple, "I've been thinking of you a lot and would love to chat" message. A text is fine if you're shy, but the phone is better. It can feel crazy good for you both to hear a long-lost voice.

**Put in the time:** Building stronger friendships requires consistent effort and investment. Make time for regular catch-ups, shared activities, and longer conversations. Definitely book the time in advance—better yet, make it a recurring appointment on your calendars with reminders.

**Be a good listener:** Show genuine interest in your friends' lives and actively listen to their thoughts and feelings. You'll have a lot of catching up to do at first, but remember, you have that recurring time on your calendars to do it!

**Be transparent:** Nothing builds trust and real friendship better than authenticity. Share your true self with your friends and encourage them to do the same. Embrace vulnerability by expressing your feelings, fears, and aspirations.

**Be there:** Show up for your friends when they need you. Be reliable and dependable by following through on commitments and offering a helping hand or shoulder to cry on during challenging times.

**Commit to the thick and the thin:** The strongest friendships will often be about two people learning how to be better versions of themselves, together. That means celebrating the good, unpacking the bad, and helping each other learn from mistakes. Be a cheerleader or go to the mat for each other. Bring the tough love, but never the judgment.

Finally, when it comes to building solid friendships, go for quality over quantity. The same studies examining the friendship connection reveal that supportive relationships bring the most benefits. Remember that a great friendship is a two-way street. Effort, commitment, authenticity, and happiness should come from both directions.

**採取第一步:** 如果你一直在想一位老朋友，那麼他們很有可能也在想你。用一個簡單的“我一直在想你，很想聊聊天。”消息聯繫他們。如果你有點害羞，發個短信也可以，但打電話更好。你們兩個都會很高興聽到久違的聲音。

**投入時間:** 建立更牢固的友誼需要持續的努力和投入。安排時間定期聚會，進行共同活動和長談。事先確定好時間，最好在行事曆上安排定期見面，並設定提醒。

**做個好聽眾:** 真誠地關心朋友們的生活，積極傾聽他們的想法和感受。起初你們可能有很多事情要補充，但記住，你們已經在行事曆上安排了定期見面來完成這些事情！

**坦率坦誠:** 沒有什麼比真實性更能建立信任和真正的友誼。與朋友分享真實的自我，並鼓勵他們做同樣的事情。通過表達你的感受、恐懼和渴望來接納脆弱性。

**守望相助:** 當朋友需要你時，要及時出現。要可靠，信守承諾，在困難時伸出援助之手，或給予肩膀供他們倚靠。

**在艱難和困苦時承諾:** 最堅固的友誼往往是兩個人一起學會如何成為更好的自己。這意味著一起慶祝美好時光，一起面對不好的時光，幫助彼此從錯誤中吸取教訓。成為對方的啦啦隊或守護天使。給予堅定的愛，但永遠不帶評判。

最後，當建立穩固的友誼時，請優先考慮質量而非數量。同樣研究友誼/幸福聯繫的研究顯示，支持性的關係帶來最多的好處。請記住，一段偉大的友誼是雙向的。努力、理解、承諾、真誠和幸福應該來自雙方。