



## “Mingling for the Mind”

*A Guide to a Better Mental Health*



By: Veronica M.

As people age, there can be mental health and mood changes that can naturally occur inside the brain. This can have a negative impact on the individual’s well-being. These challenges include depression, anxiety or mood disorders. Regardless of race, gender or age, anyone can experience these issues with their mental health, so it is important to be aware of them.

One of the healthiest things you can do for your mental health is to socialize. Socializing creates a chemical rush of happiness in the human brain. It also provides several benefits to your overall health.

Research shows that individuals who choose to have an active social life benefit from the following:

- ❖ Enhanced Mental Health
- ❖ Sense of Belonging
- ❖ Better Self-Esteem
- ❖ Improved Physical Health
- ❖ Increased Cognitive Functioning
- ❖ Accountability
- ❖ Purposeful Living

Did you know your overall health will start to improve after being more actively involved with others? Being socially active

promotes better health and longer life span. Research shows that because of social engagement, one’s immune system becomes stronger. When the immune system becomes stronger, a person can fight off viruses, colds and even some types of cancers.

Now, on to mental health. Interacting with other individuals, regardless of who they are (family, friends, peers, coworkers, group members, etc.), enhances good feelings. Positive feelings not only let you enjoy things but also keeps your brain healthy. These feelings can decrease the chances of you developing chronic depression.

*Regardless of race, gender or age, anyone can experience challenges to their mental health.*

Older adults may find it challenging to be around others if they no longer drive, have limited income or feel as though they don’t have friends or family nearby. Attending Senior Center’s (such as Aging Services) enables older adults to get out and about. This in turn reduces isolation and can decrease the risk of depression (“Benefits of Socialization”, 2017). Since this creates an environment for other older adults to meet each other, they may also be helping someone else that felt the same way as they once did!



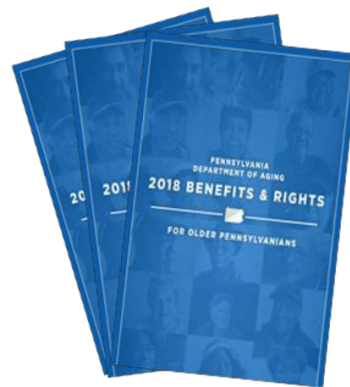
The communication and participation that an older adult actively engages in creates stimulation within the brain. Such settings provide opportunities to reminisce about life, talk about current events, share stories or use imagination is great for the mind (“Benefits of Socialization”, 2017).

What happens within the brain when you feel happy? Chemicals are released during certain activities. There are four primary chemicals in the brain for happiness; dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin and endorphins (Buckner, 2017). So, let your mind relax and enjoy all the good feelings!

However, if you are experiencing mental health challenges, please contact your personal care provider (PCP) for a professional diagnosis and treatment. Stress and depression make things difficult to handle. It is crucial to pay attention to stressors and taking the time to learn how to manage stress. Stressors may include; loneliness, lack of transportation and feeling isolated. It is important to talk to

someone about your challenges to eliminates stress.

Transportation is available to social centers, doctor visits or to the store for much needed groceries. This is one of the many resources that are provided to older adults. It is your right to know the programs available through the Pennsylvania Department of Aging. For more information about services you could benefit from, contact Aging Services Inc. at (724) 349 4500. Remember, your health is important. Stay active and socialize to keep on top of your mental health!



---

For more information about activities that you could benefit from, visit:  
<https://agelessgrace.com/senior-citizen-activities>

Resources available to you and tips on healthy aging can be found on the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services website at: <https://www.hhs.gov/aging/index.html>

Are you or someone you know facing challenges with mental health? Talk to your doctor about Depression or Contact the National Institute of Mental Health for resources at: 1-866-615-6464

#### References

1. Benefits of socialization for seniors. (July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017). Retrieved from <https://foundationforseniorcare.org/benefits-socialization-seniors/>
2. Buckner, C. (October 30, 2017). 4 Chemicals that activate happiness, and how to gamify them. Retrieved from <https://technologyadvice.com/blog/information-technology/activate-chemicals-gamify-happiness-nicole-lazzaro/>.
3. 7 Ways socializing benefits seniors. (February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016). Retrieved from <https://www.homeplaceatmidway.com/7-ways-socializing-benefits-seniors/>
4. Russell, R. (2004). Social networks among elderly men caregivers. *Journal of Men's Studies* 13(1). Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3149/jms.1301.121>