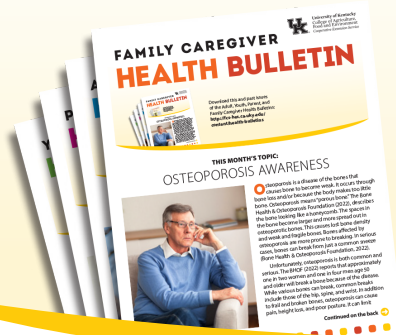


FAMILY CAREGIVER

HEALTH BULLETIN



DECEMBER 2023

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

SELF-CARE AND STAYING CONNECTED



Self-care refers to taking time to do things that can improve physical and mental health. When taken seriously, self-care contributes to stress management, lowering the risk of illness, and increasing energy (NIH, 2023). Self-care comes in a variety of forms such as nutrition, exercise, sleep, relaxation, and positivity. Staying connected with your family and community can also serve as a form of self-care. Staying connected and having a feeling of belonging provides not only practical help but also emotional support and improved motivation, health, and overall happiness.

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According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), having a sense of community is critical to survival. When you are a part of a community, you are more likely to experience a sense of belonging, support, and purpose. Communities provide a place to turn when you need help with something or you need to talk about a difficult situation. When you belong to a group, you are more likely to feel like your true self. It can be fulfilling when other people count on you, or you count on others, and you know they are there for you.

Whether you connect with one or two people or you connect with many, building a community and feeling a sense of belonging takes effort. Not every type of connection is equally satisfying or soul nourishing. Where you find community and what it means to you, is up to you. Some examples include:

- Family
- Friends
- Church
- Social Media
- Clubs
- Volunteer experiences
- Support groups
- Community events
- Nature

Finding a sense of community can start with self-reflection according to NAMI. When you are aware of what is important to you, you are more likely to connect with others who share your values, beliefs, and interests. To increase a sense of belonging, the Mayo Clinic suggests being mindful of others, making conversation, listening to others, letting go of your judgments, keeping an open mind and trying new activities and/or meeting new people, practicing a positive attitude, validating and accepting the feelings of others, and focusing on similarities rather than differences.

NAMI emphasizes that people need people. Remember that just as it is important for your mental



health to find or be a part of a community, it is also important for others to have you as a part of theirs.

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