



### DID YOU KNOW?

Neuroscientists have demonstrated how gratifying social stimuli, such as seeing smiling faces, receiving positive validation from our peers or getting messages from our loved ones activate the secretion of dopamine, the happiness hormone.

### Show Care

Showing care is a positive way to move through our various social interactions. It can help reduce unpleasant emotions and conflicts in order to engage in appeasement and resolution strategies. It's not about avoiding difficult situations, but rather adopting a constructive approach based on participation, collaboration, cooperation, creativity, decisions and accountability.

### Social Support: Protecting Your Mental Health

Social support “increases our ability to cope, our self-esteem, our sense of belonging and our skills by sharing practical and psychosocial resources.\*3” It protects us from the negative impacts of stress and contributes to our resilience and capacity to adapt.

The five essential functions of social support are: **emotional support, social integration, feeling needed, having our intrinsic value validated, and acquiring tangible or material support.**

**Tight-knit and intimate connections** provide us with reassurance and help us recharge. **Distant relationships, that is, those that are developed in our outermost network,** help broaden our horizons and learn from others. These relationships allow us to step out of the echo chambers created by social media algorithms, which only show us opinions that are similar to ours. Through distant relationships with people who have differing points of view, we're able to strengthen our own positions and thought processes.

### Me and My Community

Take a moment to think about your network. Who are the people in your life that...

you identify with?

you confide in?

reassure you?

help you?

encourage you?

have negatively impacted you?

have helped you become who you are today?

would write down your name in response to this same set of questions?

Social capital is one of six factors that impact happiness according to the United Nations' World Happiness Report.

### DID YOU KNOW?



### Social Capital

Social capital is defined by the quality of social relations in a community, including relationships between family members, friends and other members of the community.

Why is it called social “capital”? Because our social networks are accumulated over time—like financial capital—and because they yield benefits, such as informal mutual aid or simply the pleasure of being socially integrated and participating in satisfying social interactions.



### Different factors impact social capital<sup>4</sup>:

- 1 Trust** — To have a high level of trust in our community, among loved ones, neighbours, work colleagues and institutions. To be able to socialize, have regular activities with friends, loved ones and others, do sports, and get involved socially.
- 2 Relationships with people who are different than us** — To have positive relationships with different members of a society. To build connections with people from different communities.
- 3 Freedom** — To be able to choose the meaning and trajectory of one's own life.
- 4 Equality** — To show mutual respect and solidarity. To act against inequality and appease social tensions.

Steadily maintaining robust and strong social networks with people and communities can help us manage a variety of situations, adapt, and get back on our feet.

Increasing social capital is a key ingredient to promote community resilience.

# FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS

and Hold Each Other Close



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## 7 Ways Valid at All Times

Every year since 2016, Mouvement Santé mentale Québec has highlighted one of its **7 tips** to help maintain a good individual and collective **mental health**. Discover the latest tip —Foster Relationships—here!



### What is mental health?

Mental health is a **dynamic balance between the different elements that make up human life**: the social, physical, spiritual, economic, emotional and psychological **spheres**. Good mental health helps us **take action, live up to our potential, cope with challenging moments that occur in our daily lives** and **contribute to our community**. It is influenced by our living conditions and both societal and individual values. Mental **health** is a form of individual and collective wealth.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

- Attachment contributes to the healthy development of the parts of the brain that are related to children's affective and social capabilities.
- As a teenager, belonging to a group and maintaining healthy relationships based on mutual aid, acceptance of who we are, and respect are all factors that have a positive impact on identity construction.
- In group settings, there is a direct relationship between clear goals and a shared understanding, and the amount of energy we have to take action.
- At work, feelings of being helped and supported become a bulwark against stress. For 85% of Gen Zers, "employee well-being and work environment come in second on their list of criteria when choosing a job, after interest [in the] position (92%), and well above pay (49%).\*<sup>1</sup> "
- The sincere and caring relationships that we maintain with others throughout our lives have a positive impact on our health and contribute to extending our life expectancy.
- A sense of belonging to a group can protect our mental health.

### What does it mean to FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS?

To FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS and hold each other close implies:

- Being a part of a welcoming society;
- Developing and maintaining relationships that make us feel good;
- Developing our capacity to build networks that reflect our values;
- Having activities and projects; defending causes alongside others;
- Receiving support in our journeys and supporting others in theirs;
- Knowing that we can count on someone and that others can count on us;
- Experiencing a sense of belonging and solidarity;
- Building robust social networks for both individuals and communities.

FOSTERING RELATIONSHIPS also means having empathy, listening, and caring; developing a sense of belonging, deepening our relationships with ourselves and others, and living in an environment where social acceptance is the norm... And that's just the start!



### Self-Knowledge: The First Building Block of All Relationships

When we know ourselves, we're able to begin understanding our values and needs, which lays the groundwork to build relationships based in mutual respect. Our bodies, and the emotions they allow us to feel, provide us with a ton of precious information about the quality of the relationships we experience. Learn how to decode the messages your emotions are sending by reading the tips in "**FEEL THE MOMENT - Get the message.\*<sup>2</sup>**"



### Dare to Be Vulnerable

Being in relationships requires both sharing and accepting to be in a position of vulnerability. There certainly is an element of risk in the act of opening up, but it's also a fundamental aspect of relationships. The more we share, the more likely we are to develop deep connections.

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7WAYS TO  
RECHARGE YOUR BATTERIES

WORKING  
TOGETHER  
TO PROMOTE  
MENTAL  
HEALTH

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The Mouvement Santé mentale Québec is an association of community organizations dedicated to creating, developing and reinforcing good mental health practices. It maintains a presence and involvement in regions across Québec through its member organizations:

SMQ—Bas-Saint-Laurent | SMQ—Chaudière-Appalaches | SMQ—Côte-Nord | SMQ—Haut-Richelieu | SMQ—Lac-Saint-Jean | SMQ—Pierre-De-Saurel | SMQ—Rive-Sud | ACSM—Filiale Québec | ACSM—Filiale de Saguenay | Cap Santé Outaouais | Centre Accalmie | Comité Prévention Suicide Lebel-sur-Quévillon | L'Ensoleillée, ressource communautaire en santé mentale, Perspective Communautaire en Santé Mentale | Raiddat

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\* Asterisks are used throughout the text to indicate quotes that have been translated from the original French.

<sup>1</sup> <https://moodwork.com/blog/well-being/generation-z-et-qvt/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://mouvementsmq.ca/recherche-doutils/?&theme=ressentir>

<sup>3</sup> CHOUINARD, Maud-Christine. « Soutien social » dans *Les concepts en sciences infirmières*, 2nd Edition, under the direction of Monique Formanier and Ljiljana Jovic, Lyon, Mallet Conseil, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Source: John HELLIWELL, Richard LAYARD, Jeffrey SACHS, World Happiness Report, 2012, p. 69-70.