

Grade 12 NTI Day #2 ELA

Teacher: Mrs. Lee

Text:

**Social Interaction is Critical for Mental and Physical Health**

By Jane E. Brody

Assignment Instruction:

- Task 1 – Read and Annotate the Short Story
  - Underline key ideas and details
  - Make notes in the margin every few paragraphs – write a summary or ask a question
- Task 2 – Complete the text dependent questions (1-5). Be sure to respond to short answer prompts with complete sentences.
- Task 3 – Complete the 3 Discussion questions. Be sure to respond in three to four complete sentences

Important:

This assignment will also be available in Google Classroom. Please feel free to contact Mrs. Lee with any questions via email: [andrea.lee@pineville.kyschools.us](mailto:andrea.lee@pineville.kyschools.us)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# Social Interaction is Critical for Mental and Physical Health

By Jane E. Brody  
2017

*Jane E. Brody is an American journalist who mostly covers science and nutrition. She is the author of a weekly "Personal Health" column in the New York Times that spanned from 1976 to 2022. In this article, Brody writes about the effects of social interaction.*

***As you read, take notes on the physical and mental health effects of social interaction.***

- [1] Hurray for the HotBlack Coffee cafe in Toronto for declining to offer Wi-Fi to its customers. There are other such cafes, to be sure, including seven of the eight New York City locations of Café Grumpy.

But it's HotBlack's reason for the electronic blackout that is cause for hosannas.<sup>1</sup> As its president, Jimson Bienenstock, explained, his aim is to get customers to talk with one another instead of being buried in their portable devices.

"It's about creating a social vibe," he told a New York Times reporter. "We're a vehicle for human interaction, otherwise it's just a commodity."

What a novel idea! Perhaps Mr. Bienenstock instinctively knows what medical science has been increasingly demonstrating for decades: Social interaction is a critically important contributor to good health and longevity.



*"Untitled" by Jed Villejo is licensed under CC0.*

- [5] Personally, I don't need research-based evidence to appreciate the value of making and maintaining social connections. I experience it daily during my morning walk with up to three women, then before and after my swim in the locker room of the YMCA where the use of electronic devices is not allowed.

The locker room experience has been surprisingly rewarding. I've made many new friends with whom I can share both joys and sorrows. The women help me solve problems big and small, providing a sounding board, advice and counsel and often a hearty laugh that brightens my day.

---

1. a joyful cry

And, as myriad studies have shown, they may also be helping to save my life.

As the Harvard Women's Health Watch reported, "Dozens of studies have shown that people who have satisfying relationships with family, friends and their community are happier, have fewer health problems, and live longer."

In a study of 7,000 men and women in Alameda County, Calif., begun in 1965, Lisa F. Berkman and S. Leonard Syme found that "people who were disconnected from others were roughly three times more likely to die during the nine-year study than people with strong social ties," John Robbins recounted in his marvelous book on health and longevity, "Healthy at 100."

- [10] This major difference in survival occurred regardless of people's age, gender, health practices or physical health status. In fact, the researchers found that "those with close social ties and unhealthful lifestyles (such as smoking, obesity and lack of exercise) actually lived longer than those with poor social ties but more healthful living habits," Mr. Robbins wrote. However, he quickly added, "Needless to say, people with both healthful lifestyles and close social ties lived the longest of all."

In another study, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* in 1984, researchers at the Health Insurance Plan of Greater New York found that among 2,320 men who had survived a heart attack, those with strong connections with other people had only a quarter the risk of death within the following three years as those who lacked social connectedness.

Researchers at Duke University Medical Center also found that social ties can reduce deaths among people with serious medical conditions. Beverly H. Brummett and colleagues reported in 2001 that among adults with coronary artery disease, the mortality rate was 2.4 times higher among those who were socially isolated.

In a column I wrote in 2013 called "Shaking Off Loneliness," I cited a review of research published in 1988 indicating that "social isolation is on a par with high blood pressure, obesity, lack of exercise or smoking as a risk factor for illness and early death."

People who are chronically lacking in social contacts are more likely to experience elevated levels of stress and inflammation. These, in turn, can undermine the well-being of nearly every bodily system, including the brain.

- [15] Absent social interactions, blood flow to vital organs is likely to be reduced and immune function may be undermined. Even how genes are expressed can be adversely affected, impairing the body's ability to turn off inflammation. Chronic inflammation has been linked to heart disease, arthritis, Type 2 diabetes and even suicide attempts.

In a 2010 report in *The Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, Debra Umberson and Jennifer Karas Montez, sociology researchers at the University of Texas at Austin, cited "consistent and compelling evidence linking a low quantity or quality of social ties with a host of conditions," including the development and worsening of cardiovascular disease, repeat heart attacks, autoimmune disorders, high blood pressure, cancer and slowed wound healing.

The Texas researchers pointed out that social interactions can enhance good health through a positive influence on people's living habits. For example, if none of your friends smoke, you'll be less likely to smoke. According to the researchers, the practice of health behaviors like getting regular exercise, consuming a balanced diet and avoiding smoking, excessive weight gain and abuse of alcohol and drugs "explains about 40

percent of premature mortality as well as substantial morbidity and disability in the United States.”

Lack of social interactions also damages mental health. The emotional support provided by social connections helps to reduce the damaging effects of stress and can foster “a sense of meaning and purpose in life,” the Texas researchers wrote.

Emma Seppala of the Stanford Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education, and author of the 2016 book “The Happiness Track,” wrote, “People who feel more connected to others have lower levels of anxiety and depression. Moreover, studies show they also have higher self-esteem, greater empathy for others, are more trusting and cooperative and, as a consequence, others are more open to trusting and cooperating with them.

[20] “In other words,” Dr. Seppala explained, “social connectedness generates a positive feedback loop of social, emotional and physical well-being.”

She suggested that a societal decline in social connectedness may help to explain recent increases in reports of loneliness, isolation and alienation, and may be why loneliness has become a leading reason people seek psychological counseling. By 2004, she wrote, sociological research revealed that more than 25 percent of Americans had no one to confide in. They lacked a close friend with whom they felt comfortable sharing a personal problem.

For those seeking a health-promoting lifestyle, it’s not enough to focus on eating your veggies and getting regular exercise. Dr. Seppala advises: “Don’t forget to connect.”

*“Social Interaction Is Critical for Mental and Physical Health” by Jane E. Brody. From The New York Times. © 2017 The New York Times Company. All rights reserved. Used under license.*

*Unless otherwise noted, this content is licensed under the [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)*

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which statement best describes the central idea of the text?
  - A. Doctors have yet to identify a link between friendships and positive lifestyle choices, but from the author's experience it is clear that there is one.
  - B. Fewer people are lonely today than historically because advances in technology have given people more ways to connect with their friends and family.
  - C. Having friendships and being a part of a community are a vital part of long-term health that are often overlooked as a type of healthful living habit.
  - D. Exercising is the most important habit a person can develop if they want to be healthy, and meeting people while exercising is a great way to reduce loneliness.
  
2. How does the author's claim about the use of electronic devices tie to the overall argument of the text?
  - A. The author claims that electronic devices diminish people's attention spans so that they spend less time learning about and practicing healthy habits.
  - B. The author claims that electronic devices hinder social interaction and therefore limit opportunities for people to support their health through relationships.
  - C. The author claims that electronic devices offer abundant resources about physical and mental health so that people can rely less on doctors and therapists.
  - D. The author claims that electronic devices provide information about restaurants, cafes, gyms and other public places which increases people's ability to connect with others.
  
3. How do paragraphs 1-6 contribute to the overall effectiveness of the text structure?
  - A. Paragraphs 1-6 identify several misconceptions about social interactions which the author goes on to refute using medical evidence.
  - B. Paragraphs 1-6 provide relatable examples of the benefits of social interactions before providing a variety of examples of scientific research.
  - C. Paragraphs 1-6 tell the story of how a lack of social interactions affected the author which caused them to want to learn more about the benefits.
  - D. Paragraphs 1-6 share anecdotes of people who benefited from social interactions who then went on to become experts in the science of social interactions.
  
4. What is the purpose of paragraph 21?
  - A. Paragraph 21 highlights a study that found that 25 percent of Americans report strong social connections.
  - B. Paragraph 21 shows that reports of loneliness have decreased at the same time as social connectedness has declined.
  - C. Paragraph 21 suggests a connection between an overall decline in social interactions and a rise in feelings of loneliness.
  - D. Paragraph 21 explains that researchers are looking for a relationship between social connectedness and mental well-being.

5. What is the impact of social interaction on physical and mental health?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

