

Counselor's Corner
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Making Friends as We Age
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Are having friends and social connections as we get older as important as they were when we were younger? You bet they are! Having someone to talk to and spend time with isn't the only benefit. **Research shows it can actually help us live longer.** A 2010 Brigham Young University study reports that "When someone is connected to a group and feels responsibility for other people, that sense of purpose and meaning translates into taking better care of themselves and taking fewer risks."

It is a myth that you cannot make new friends when you are over 50, or even if you are over 80! Our life circumstances often change as we age. People get divorced, lose a partner or spouse, make geographic moves, find new hobbies and interests, or just recognize that adding new relationships enriches their lives.

Here are a few ideas for finding new friends and connections:

Join social media. Learn to make the most of your Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. Look up old friends and start a conversation. Post things about yourself and links you find interesting. Posting gives others the opportunity to know you better. Comment on others' posts too. Join a specific interest group on Facebook, like knitting, organic gardening, game playing, political or religious interests. By starting with a shared interest, you will have much opportunity for conversation and building relationships within the group.

Take Classes. Most communities offer plenty of opportunities to participate in continuing education classes, lectures, and discussion groups. Here in Birmingham, it may be the Horizon's Program through UAB, your temple or church's adult education offerings, or the Brown Bag series at the library. Meeting people can be easier when there is a structured conversation to start you off.

Volunteer! Find an organization or cause that is meaningful to you and find out how you can share your talents. CJFS has a variety of volunteer opportunities from our new CARES program to teaching ESL to office support. Most organizations are very flexible, you can offer your time every week or just once a month.

If you would like to volunteer at CJFS, please contact Lise Grace at 205-879-3438.