



# 30 DAYS to a *Healthier Social Life*

**R**elocations, new babies, and other life transitions can throw a wrench in your social network, leaving you feeling disconnected and lonely. Use the adjustment period as a chance to make a fresh start. Carefully consider your priorities and build connections that support your personal health and the well-being of your family.

Women who feel a balanced sense of connection are healthier and more resilient to stress, anxiety and depression. According to a recent Gallup poll, stay-at-home moms are more vulnerable to depression compared to women who work outside of the home and isolation could play a factor. Overall women are twice as likely to suffer from depression compared to men.

"When there is a lack of social interaction and a decrease of peer to peer contact, there is great potential for depression which is a combination of sadness and anger," says Lisa Bahar, a marriage and family therapist and professional counselor.

**One day at a time, rev up your social engine for increased happiness and satisfaction by using one or several of our 30 tips:**

**JOIN A MOTHER'S GROUP.** Your sense of self-worth and sense of belonging increases when part of a group of supportive friends.

**CALL AN OLD FRIEND.** Reconnecting helps you rebuild your confidence as meet new moms.

**EMAIL A MOM YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW BETTER.** Arrange a time to meet with you and your kids for a playdate at the park or the mall play area.

**SEND A FACEBOOK FRIEND REQUEST TO A MOM YOU'VE MET RECENTLY.** Initiating friendships shows you welcome new friends and boosts your self-confidence.

**VOLUNTEER.** Your efforts will positively impact others, and you'll derive satisfaction and joy from helping out.

**SHAKE OUT THE WELCOME MAT.** Greet your new neighbors with a plate of warm cookies. They'll appreciate your thoughtfulness and a friendly face in a new neighborhood.



**STRIKE UP A CONVERSATION.** Kids are great icebreakers. Even a casual conversation with another mom can cheer you.

**BRIGHTEN A FRIEND'S DAY.** Send a card to let her know you're thinking about her or call just to chat.

**CLICK INTO AN ONLINE MOMS GROUP.** Find comfort knowing your situation is not unique. Reaching out to other moms online who can relate can help you feel less isolated.

**TEXT A FRIEND WITH A NEW BABY.** The first few weeks can be a rough adjustment. By reaching out, you'll help her feel less alone. If possible, arrange a time to stop by with a meal.

**COORDINATE A MEET AND GREET.** Got school-aged kids? Invite other classroom moms to a "seasoned moms" lunch to build a sense of community.

**SIGN UP FOR A YOGA, ZUMBA OR JAZZERCISE CLASS.** Exercise releases mood-boosting endorphins and wards off stress. Group fitness helps you feel a sense of accountability.

**SPRING FOR A GIRLS NIGHT OUT!** You may feel a little tired the next day, but recalling all the laughs and stimulating conversation will put a skip in your step.

**SURROUND YOURSELF WITH POSITIVE PEOPLE.** Move away from draining one-sided friendships that zap your energy.

**SEEK BALANCE IN YOUR YESES.** Stress less by saying no to requests that aren't a priority or don't interest you. Your family will thank you.

**GO ON A MINI-ADVENTURE.** Explore another part of town, discover a local museum, or take a class that interests you. Stepping out of your normal routine juices your creativity.

**MAKE TIME TO PLAY.** Carve out 15 or 20 minutes to pursue an activity you love. Playing is candy for the soul.

**START A WALKING GROUP.** Walking and talking for an hour is great exercise and like free therapy!

**DINE AND PLAY.** Invite other moms, whose husbands travel or work late, for a two-hour afternoon play date and potluck dinner. Dinner done, kids sleep well, and you're rewarded with a quiet evening ahead!

**COORDINATE A GROUP OUTING AT THE ZOO OR A CHILDREN'S MUSEUM.** Both you and your kids will appreciate the social interaction, exercise and education these venues offer.

**CHECK OUT THE LIBRARY.** Libraries often feature interesting presenters, book clubs and other activities. Attend a few discussions to meet others with shared interests.

**ORGANIZE A GAME NIGHT OR BOOK CLUB WITH YOUR FRIENDS.** You and your friends will love the excuse for a lively evening escape!

**REACH OUT TO A RECEPTIVE MEMBER OF A GROUP OF MOMS.** If she is an active volunteer at your child's school in activities that interest you, ask how you can get involved.

**REJUVENATE AT THE SPA.** Soothing for the mind and body, a study at Cedars-Sinai

Medical Center found Swedish massage in particular reduces the stress hormone cortisol, boosting immunity by increasing white blood cells which fight infection and disease.

**RECONNECT WITH YOUR SPOUSE.** Find a sitter, get dressed up and head out for a date night. Feeling sociable? Invite another couple to join you.

**THROW A NEIGHBORHOOD BACKYARD BBQ.** Provide outdoor games like badminton, horseshoes, volleyball, chalk, bubbles and hula hoops for the kids to play together.

**SUPPORT A FRIEND WHO SELLS MAKE-UP, JEWELRY, COOKWARE OR CANDLES BY ACCEPTING AN INVITATION TO ONE OF THE PARTIES.** Go with a budget and enjoy hanging out with other women.

**TAKE A BREAK.** Schedule time alone to head to a pottery place and paint; go clothes shopping; or watch a movie.

**REGROUP WITH YOUR KIDS.** Set aside a relaxing afternoon to reconnect with your kids. Head to the park for a picnic lunch, play a board game, try ice skating or go bowling.

**TOUCH BASE WITH YOUR FAMILY AROUND THE DINNER TABLE.** Communication builds stronger families. Talk about your day's highs and lows, discuss frustrations and celebrate successes.

*Freelance journalist* **CHRISTA MELNYK HINES** is the author of *Confidently Connected: A Mom's Guide to a Satisfying Social Life*. Find her in the "Confidently Connected Moms" discussion group on Facebook.



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