

LIFESTYLE-BASED MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR DEPRESSION

# Social connection

People with major depressive disorder who perceive their social support as stronger have improved outcomes in terms of symptoms, recovery, and functioning.

Membership in social groups can protect against developing major depressive disorder, alleviate existing depression, and prevent relapse.

**Scan for more information**



## What can I do?

**We can all feel lonely sometimes, but it is possible to improve how supported we feel.**

- Start by considering if there are people in your life already. Are there ways you can create stronger connections with them?
- Seek out opportunities for new social contact. Group exercise, arts and craft classes, community theatre productions or choirs, volunteering or community gardens are just some of the ways you can access more social opportunities.
- If new social opportunities make you feel nervous, think about ways you can take small steps - like asking your grocer their name, or asking a work colleague about their weekend.
- If you feel uncertain about your ability to engage with others, you can learn specific social skills from a suitably trained professional.

## Who can help?

**There are many ways you can increase your opportunities for social contact including:**

- Local programs like community groups, hobbies, and sports groups.
- Some research suggests that volunteering can reduce depressive symptoms. Regular volunteering (e.g., shifts once a week ongoing) appears to have greater benefits when compared to irregular volunteering (e.g., a single once-off shift).

**You can also talk to your health care practitioner about social prescribing, where they can help you link in with community organisations and resources that can support social connectedness.**