

# Keep Engaged with the People Around You

## Objective

To increase the time you spend engaged with people around you.

## You Should Know

When people are suicidal, therapists consider the risk factors in a person’s life as well as the protective factors. Being engaged with people around you is one of the most important protective factors because:

- Being with others reminds you that you are not alone in the world.
- Being with others reminds you that people care about you.
- Being with others usually brings enjoyment.
- Being with others can give you some perspective on your problems.
- BEING WITH OTHERS KEEPS YOU SAFE.

When you are feeling depressed you might believe that your life has no meaning or purpose, and you feel like you just want to be left alone. **BUT DON’T GIVE IN TO THESE FEELINGS!**

These feelings of wanting to be alone come from your “disease” of depression. They do not represent what is best for you and, in fact, represent what is worst for you.

**Fact: The more you spend time with people—family, friends, co-workers, people in your community—the less hopeless you will feel and the safer you will be.**

## What to Do

Start by looking at the social activities listed below and choose activities that might interest you. You do not have to be wildly enthusiastic about any particular activity, just put a check by activities that you *might* like or that you *used to* enjoy.

\_\_\_\_\_ Have a meal with a friend.

\_\_\_\_\_ Attend a Meetup (go to Meetup.com for groups in your area).

\_\_\_\_\_ Take a walk with a friend.

\_\_\_\_\_ Join a community service group (Rotary Club, Kiwanis, Young Professionals, and so on).

\_\_\_\_\_ Spend time with friends and family. List two or three people that come to mind:

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- \_\_\_\_\_ Join a spiritual or religious group or attend a religious service.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attend a nature-related activity (e.g., hiking or bird watching).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Engage in a hobby or join a craft-related group (e.g., knitting, photography, and so on).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sign up for a course or attend a lecture.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attend a community or political meeting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Book a trip and travel to an interesting destination.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attend a support group.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer to help others (check out [www.VolunteerMatch.org](http://www.VolunteerMatch.org)).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Join a sports team.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do something where you can meet new people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Take a cooking class.

Other social ideas:

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When you get up each morning, think about at least one social activity you can do each day. Then, fill in the 'Social Engagement Chart.' Write down that activity in the first column of the chart. At the end of the day, fill-in the amount of time you engaged in this activity in the second column. Then, describe your mood after you have participated in the activity in the last column.

Please note that Internet-based social activities like social media and email can be helpful in keeping in touch with others, but they do not replace real-life contact with people. So, do not include them in this chart.

We strongly recommend sharing this worksheet every day with someone else. If you are very depressed, it will certainly be hard to motivate yourself to be with others and yet this is exactly what you need to do. Reporting in to someone else and sharing your reactions will be an important part of keeping you safe. Let's call this person a Support Coach or SC for short.

Your SC could be a family member, a friend, or even just an acquaintance. Think of that person as someone who can encourage you to push through your depression and do things that are healthy for you.

Write down the name of your SC here: \_\_\_\_\_.

## Weekly Social Engagement Chart

Write down the activity in the first column of the chart below. At the end of the day, write the time you engaged in this activity in the second column. Then write in a few words that describe your mood after the activity in the last column. At the end of the week, add up the time you spent engaged with others during the week.

Day of the Week	Activity	People Who Joined You	Time Spent on Activity	Your Mood Before the Activity	Your Mood After the Activity
MONDAY					
TUESDAY					
WEDNESDAY					
THURSDAY					
FRIDAY					
SATURDAY					
SUNDAY					

Time you spent engaged with others during the week: \_\_\_\_\_

Other ideas?

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### Reflections on This Exercise

What activities did you find most enjoyable?

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What was hardest thing about doing this exercise?

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List the people in your life who you feel understand your problems and can be most helpful in getting over your depression.

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How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_

(1 = not very helpful to 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

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