



Healthy Choices

The Healing Power of Relationships

BY WINSTON CRAIG

Good health is associated with having meaningful relationships. Loneliness, separation, alienation, and depression are all too common in Western society today. These factors increase when a sense of community begins to disappear.

Positive relationships appear to significantly buffer the ill effects of high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, and other risk factors for heart disease. Results from eight large-scale studies have revealed that lonely and socially isolated people have a two to three times higher risk of premature death from heart disease, strokes, cancer, and other diseases when compared to those who maintain social networks, family ties, and have a strong sense of community. Those who lived the longest had strong social ties and healthy behaviors.

The low rates of heart disease seen among the residents of Roseto, Pennsylvania, in the 1960's mystified scientists. Their high-fat diets and poor exercise habits should have put them at high risk of heart disease. Dr. Wolf observed that this village of Italian immigrants had close-knit families, community networks, devoted church-going habits, and a pervasive spirit of neighborliness. The social support system of the Roseto residents supported good health.

Isolation and loneliness are damaging to our health, while connectedness, intimacy, and a

Tips for healthy relationships:

1. Offer unconditional love to all family members.
2. Express sincere concern and support for someone in difficulty or distress.
3. Show kindness to someone with a physical disability.
4. Respect and acknowledge the sincere efforts of your colleagues.
5. Help a neighbor or friend in need, and you will be the one who is blessed.

nurturing social network are health-promoting. How we relate to others is a significant determinant of health and illness. We would do well to follow the advice of Paul to “encourage one another and build each other up” (1 Thess 5:11 NIV) and “do whatever leads to peace and to mutual edification” (Rom 14:19 NIV).

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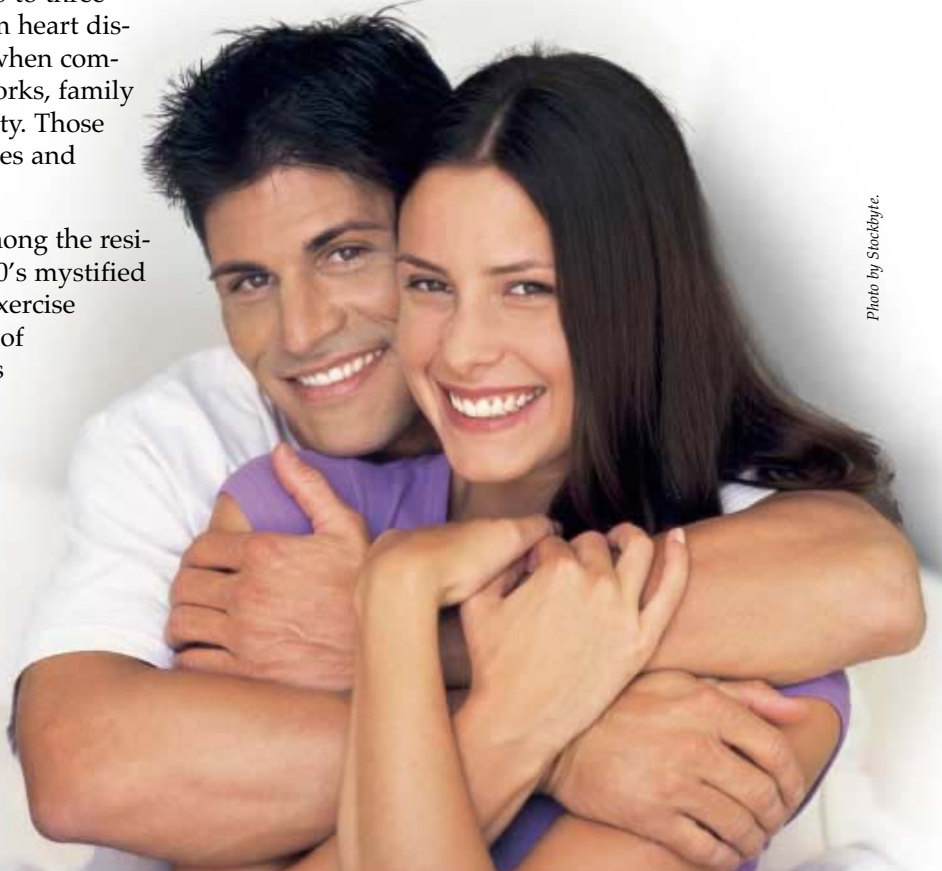


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