

# the supplement

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## TOGETHER

Togetherness is tricky these days. It feels exactly opposite of what it used to feel like. Where we once spent most of our waking hours with our colleagues, we are now spending them with our families or alone. Regardless, if we spend quality time with members of our inner circles—colleagues, relatives, or friends—we are all going to be OK. A Harvard study, initiated in 1938 and on-going today, found that inner-circle relationships were better lifelong predictors of health and happiness than IQ, wealth, or social class.

This study cited in *Together*, by Vivek H. Murphy, MD, the 19th Surgeon General of the United States, is only one of the many supporting the correlations of connection to wellbeing and of disconnection to ill health. He emphasizes the need to distinguish between loneliness, isolation, and solitude to fully understand his viewpoint. He describes loneliness as the feeling of being stranded, abandoned, or cut off from our people; isolation as the circumstance of being alone and out of touch; solitude as the state of peaceful and intentional seclusion. It is possible to feel lonely and isolated in a house or a workplace full of people. It is equally possible to feel completely content in solitude.

***Loneliness* is the feeling of being stranded, abandoned, or cut off from your people.**

***Isolation* is the circumstance of being alone and out of touch.**

***Solitude* is the state of peaceful and intentional seclusion.**

He further differentiates loneliness by the three types of relationships in which it can occur—intimate, relational, and collective. Intimate loneliness is the longing for a confidante—someone with whom you share a mutual bond of affection and trust. Relational loneliness is the yearning for quality friendships, companionship, and support. Collective loneliness is the hunger for a network or community of people who share a sense of purpose or interests. Regardless of the sphere in which it originates, loneliness feels the same. It increases our body's stress response. Connection lowers it.

Murphy cites a second study conducted by Dr. Julianne Holt-Lunstadt of Brigham Young University, who painstakingly proved that people with strong social connections are 50% less likely to die prematurely. The impact of lacking social connection on reducing life span was equal to the risk of smoking 15 cigarettes a day and greater than the risks associated with obesity, excess alcohol consumption, and lack of exercise.



Americans take pride in their self-reliance, their rugged individualism. Yet the US life expectancy barely eases us into the top 50 worldwide. The countries with the longest life expectancies as of 2017 as reported at [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov) are:

1	MONACO	89.40	10	SWITZERLAND	82.60
2	JAPAN	85.30	11	KOREA, SOUTH	82.50
3	SINGAPORE	85.20	12	ISRAEL	82.50
4	MACAU	84.60	13	LUXEMBOURG	82.30
5	SAN MARINO	83.30	14	AUSTRALIA	82.30
6	ICELAND	83.10	15	ITALY	82.30
7	HONG KONG	83.00	↓		
8	ANDORRA	82.90	43	UNITED STATES	80.00
9	GUERNSEY	82.60			

BLUE ZONE COUNTRY

When you consider the nine lessons for living longer identified by Dan Buettner in his book *The Blue Zones*, one relates to daily activity, two to diet, one to alcohol consumption, two to perspective and the majority to the importance of connection. These three lessons are:



**Make time for family | Intimate**



**Participate in a spiritual community | Relational, Collective**



**Surround yourself with like-minded people | Relational, Collective**

Note the Blue Zone lessons for connection correlate quite nicely with the three relationship spheres described by Murphy.

Yes, these days, togetherness is tricky but not impossible. Use all the technology at your fingertips to reach out to a colleague, friend or relative. You might even go old school and drop someone a handwritten note. I particularly like the handwritten notes.



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Patricia M. Fuller has dedicated the last 20+ years to designing and delivering wellness programs. Her events earn consistently excellent ratings for her holistic approach and her real world application.

Prior to concentrating in wellness, Pat taught accounting and auditing as an adjunct professor at the University of Tampa. She earned her CPA designation in 1992 as a senior associate for Coopers & Lybrand. She has a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Utah.

Pat has a PhD in holistic nutrition. In 2010, she was board certified by the Holistic Nutrition Credentialing Board. Her areas of research include stress management and eating habits. She is a Certified Wellcoach and a member of the Institute of Coaching. She is an annual attendee to The Harvard Medical School Conference, Coaching In Leadership & Healthcare.

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