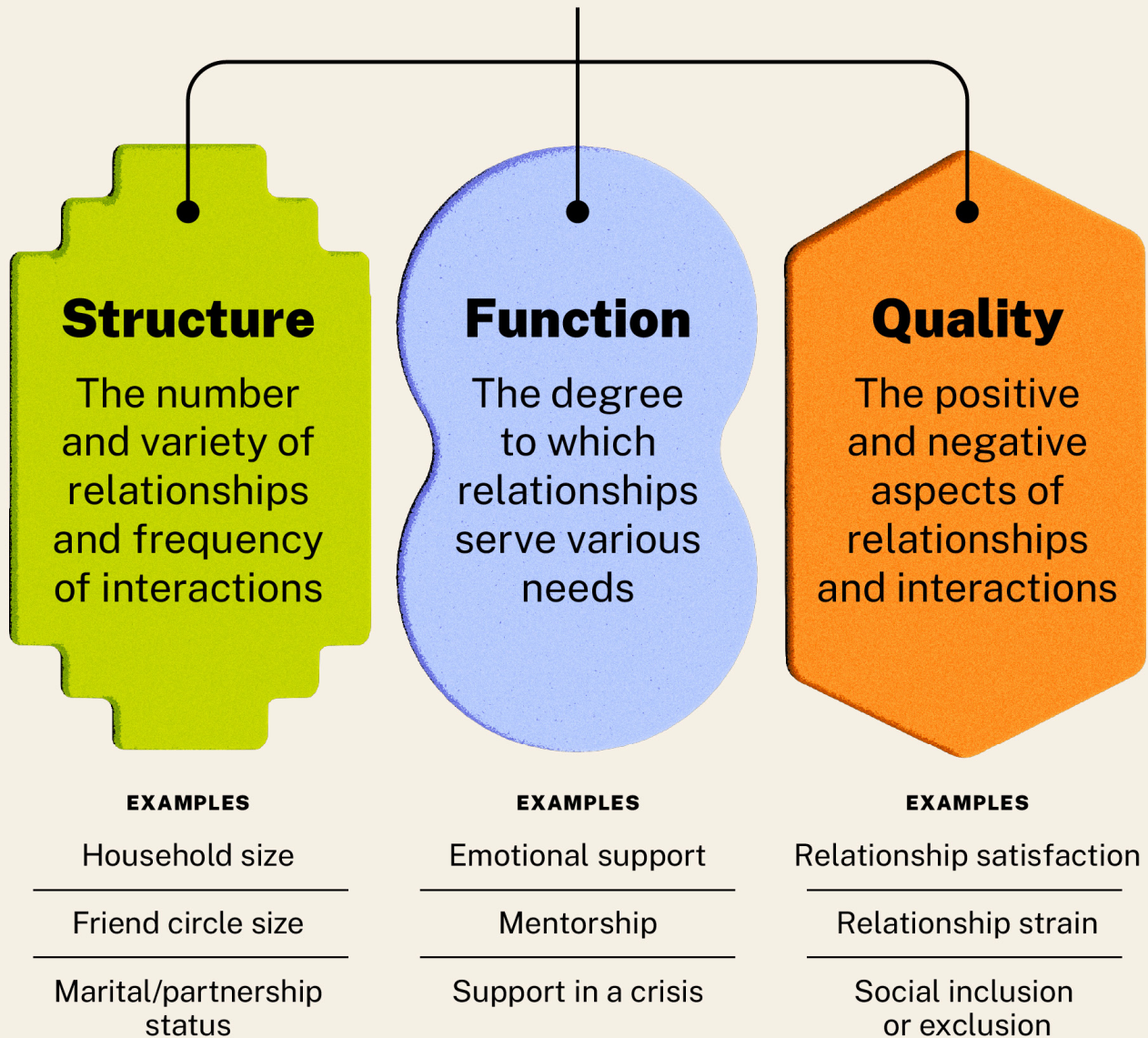


The Three Vital Components of Social Connection

The extent to which an individual is socially connected depends on multiple factors, including:



Source: Holt-Lunstad J. Why Social Relationships Are Important for Physical Health: A Systems Approach to Understanding and Modifying Risk and Protection. *Annu Rev Psychol.* 2018;69:437-458.

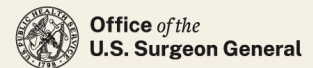
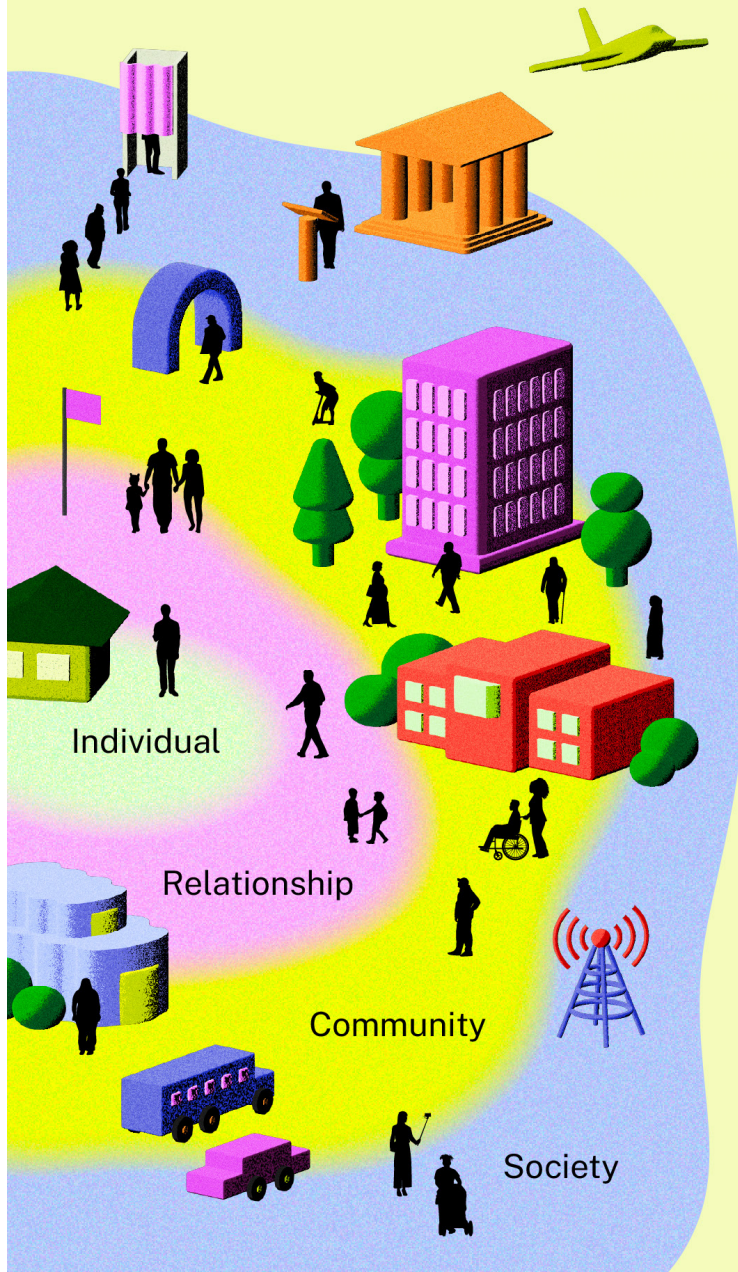


FIGURE 1: The Three Vital Components of Social Connection

Factors That Can Shape Social Connection



Individual

- Chronic disease
- Sensory and functional impairments
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Personality
- Race
- Gender
- Socioeconomic status
- Life stage

Relationships

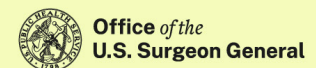
- Structure, function, and quality
- Household size
- Characteristics and behaviors of others
- Empathy

Community

- Outdoor space
- Housing
- Schools
- Workplace
- Local government
- Local business
- Community organizations
- Health care
- Transportation

Society

- Norms and values
- Public policies
- Tech environment and use
- Civic engagement
- Democratic norms
- Historical inequities



Office of the
U.S. Surgeon General

FIGURE 3: Factors That Can Shape Social Connection

What Workplaces Can Do

- **Make social connection a strategic priority in the workplace** at all levels (administration, management, and employees).⁴⁸
- **Train, resource, and empower leaders and managers** to promote connection in the workplace and implement programs that foster connection. Assess program effectiveness, identify barriers to success, and facilitate continuous quality improvement.
- **Leverage existing leadership and employee training, orientation, and wellness resources** to educate the workforce about the importance of social connection for workplace well-being, health, productivity, performance, retention, and other markers of success.
- **Create practices and a workplace culture** that allow people to connect to one another as whole people, not just as skill sets, and that fosters inclusion and belonging.
- **Put in place policies that protect workers' ability to nurture their relationships outside work** including respecting boundaries between work and non-work time, supporting caregiving responsibilities, and creating a culture of norms and practices that support these policies.
- **Consider the opportunities and challenges posed by flexible work hours and arrangements** (including remote, hybrid, and in-person work), which may impact workers' abilities to connect with others both within and outside of work. Evaluate how these policies can be applied equitably across the workforce.

What Individuals Can Do

- **Understand the power of social connection and the consequences of social disconnection** by learning how the vital components (structure, function, and quality) can impact your relationships, health, and well-being.
- **Invest time in nurturing your relationships** through consistent, frequent, and high-quality engagement with others. Take time each day to reach out to a friend or family member.
- **Minimize distraction during conversation** to increase the quality of the time you spend with others. For instance, don't check your phone during meals with friends, important conversations, and family time.
- **Seek out opportunities to serve and support others**, either by helping your family, co-workers, friends, or strangers in your community or by participating in community service.
- **Be responsive, supportive, and practice gratitude.**^{314,315} As we practice these behaviors, others are more likely to reciprocate, strengthening our social bonds, improving relationship satisfaction, and building social capital.
- **Actively engage with people of different backgrounds and experiences** to expand your understanding of and relationships with others, given the benefits associated with diverse connections.
- **Participate in social and community groups** such as fitness, religious, hobby, professional, and community service organizations to foster a sense of belonging, meaning, and purpose.
- **Reduce practices that lead to feelings of disconnection from others.** These include harmful and excessive social media use, time spent in unhealthy relationships, and disproportionate time in front of screens instead of people.
- **Seek help during times of struggle** with loneliness or isolation by reaching out to a family member, friend, counselor, health care provider, or the 988 crisis line.³¹⁶
- **Be open with your health care provider** about significant social changes in your life, as this may help them understand potential health impacts and guide them to provide recommendations to mitigate health risks.
- **Make time for civic engagement.** This could include being a positive and constructive participant in political discourse and gatherings (e.g., town halls, school board meetings, local government hearings).
- **Reflect the core values of connection** in how you approach others in conversation and through the actions you take. Key questions to ask yourself when considering your interactions with others include: How might kindness change this situation? What would it look like to treat others with respect? How can I be of service? How can I reflect my concern for and commitment to others?