

Develop a strong support system¹

Social support is an important factor in developing and maintaining healthy lifestyle behaviors. For example, family and friends can help you stay physically active by exercising with you or by encouraging you to be physically active. Friends and family can cook healthy meals together and encourage each other to make healthy food choices.

Making friendships and maintaining family ties is easier for some people than for others. But even if you're not an outgoing person, you need social support. If your support system is in need of a little strengthening, try these suggestions:

- Accept invitations to events, even if it feels awkward and difficult at first.
- Don't wait to be invited somewhere. Take the initiative and call someone.
- Set aside past differences and approach your relationships with a clean slate.
- Take part in campus and community organizations, residence hall or campus events, or family get-togethers.
- Strike up a conversation with the person next to you in class or at a local gathering. You could be introducing yourself to a new friend.
- Talk about things that interest other people. Be an alert listener.
- If you live in the residence halls, take advantage of group activities to meet people and be physically active, such as participating on an intramural activity team.
- Find people who also have an interest in developing healthy lifestyle behaviors and get involved in activities with them.

¹ Some of the material adapted from MayoClinic.com