



## HOPE Building Block 1: Relationships

Launching our HOPE Building Blocks series, we delve into the transformative influence of Relationships. Let's explore why these connections hold such significance.

In 1938, researchers began a longitudinal study of male Harvard students to track their long-term health outcomes. Over the years, the research unveiled a crucial insight: loneliness can have detrimental effects, while close relationships exhibit a positive correlation with overall health and well-being (Mineo, 2017). Essentially, fostering positive relationships contributes to longevity.

Relationships, whether with partners, children, friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, or bosses, undergo **continual evolution** (Dollard, 2018). Sustaining healthy and robust relationships requires a commitment to intentional communication, particularly when facing conflicts.

Beyond personal connections, the relationship between patients and their healthcare providers plays a pivotal role in achieving positive outcomes. At the core of this dynamic is trust, which flourishes through open and honest communication. Healthcare providers must actively create spaces where patients feel safe and empowered to openly discuss their mental and medical needs (Pellegrini, 2017).

### Why does this matter to a school like San Diego State University (SDSU)?

As we distance ourselves from the COVID-19 lockdowns, the lasting impact on the lives of students and young adults becomes increasingly evident. In 2023, the American Psychological Association released findings from their annual Stress in America survey, revealing a concerning trend- heightened stress levels have led to an upswing in mental health diagnoses and chronic illnesses across diverse demographics (APA, 2023).

Within the 18-34 age group, identified as younger adults, a staggering **34% reported the highest post-pandemic stress levels**. This cohort pinpointed financial concerns (82%), health (82%), the economy (72%), and housing costs (70%) as their predominant stressors (APA, 2023). The repercussions of this stress were profound: 71% of younger adults expressed reluctance to burden others with their problems, 67% struggled with focus, 58% felt overwhelmed by emotions, 55% found it challenging to undertake tasks, and 50% reported feeling emotionally numb (APA, 2023).

These statistics serve as a stark reminder of the collective loneliness experienced by younger adults amid today's challenges and hardships. While relationships may not resolve economic or housing market issues, they play a pivotal role in mitigating feelings of loneliness and can provide crucial support during times of stress and overwhelm.

- ❖ SDSU has many [Student Organizations and groups](#) that are free join, which are great spaces to build relationships and connections.
- ❖ Students also have access to on campus wellness services such as [counseling](#), [groups & workshops](#), and the [Center for Well-Being](#).



We know that not every student is utilizing these resources, nor are they part of a student organization, which means SDSU has the opportunity to create additional spaces that can be used to cultivate strong relationships.

### How can you promote this Building Block?

Maintaining relationships is a lot of work, but it comes with many benefits. Below are a few suggestions for you as you think about ways to strengthen this HOPE building block in your life.

- ❖ Take inventory of your relationships.
  - Are there any people who you would like to spend more time with? If so, reach out to them and schedule a time to connect. This could be over coffee or an outdoor walk.
  - Are you experiencing conflict in any of your relationships? Learn helpful tools for [Managing Conflict Resolution Effectively](#).
- ❖ Learn about [Relationship Building Skills](#) and practice implementing them.
- ❖ Connect with a mental health professional if you are struggling.

### REFERENCES

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