

The science of making friends

By Elizabeth Bernstein, Wall Street Journal

I've been going on a series of dates lately.

I exchanged numbers with the person sitting next to me at a Cabernet tasting at my favorite wine bar and went for a coffee with a neighbor I met walking my dog. I reached out to people from my past I haven't seen in years, to see if they're newly available.

I'm trying to make new friends.

A body of research shows that people with solid friendships live healthier, longer lives. Friendship decreases blood pressure and stress, reduces the risk of depression and increases longevity, in large part because someone is watching out for us.

Starting in early adulthood, our number of friends starts to decrease steadily. Changes in friendships typically happen around life transitions: graduation, parenthood, job switches, divorce or death of a spouse. One study, published in 2015 in *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences*, looked at 540 men and women and showed we lose an average of two friends when we gain a romantic partner.

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