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## Nobody Wants to be Alone at Age 100 Building a Lifelong Support System

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Study after study has shown that strong social relationships are essential for a healthy mind and body, while also enhancing our life experience. They reduce some of the bad effects of stress and help to speed recovery from psychological and physical illness. These relationships support our desire to live longer and healthier lives. They sustain us. After all, nobody wants to live to be 100 alone. Now is the time to establish the support that you'll need for life.

### Start by Supporting Yourself

You cannot get the support you need until you are willing to support yourself. Many people don't realize we have the power to attract exactly what we need into our lives. You attract what you need by nurturing yourself and staying true to yourself—by being authentic. Don't look for someone else to make it all better. Ask yourself, "If I was the only place where support existed, what would I do differently? How would I give myself the support I need?" Maybe you would start your days differently by taking more time for yourself in the mornings. How about beginning an exercise routine or taking more vacations? If you have children, try to create relationships that will support you in taking care of their activities by means of mutually beneficial arrangements, such as carpools. Try planning out your weeks ahead of time instead of living chaotically from day-to-day.

### Support Your Close Relationships

The next level of support after your own is that of family and close friends. We tend to take these relationships for granted. Just like the relationships with ourselves, we overlook their importance. Ask your partner, or the person closest to you, "What changes are you trying to make in your life? How can I support you? How can we, together, support this relationship?" Give each other the opportunity to voice

what is important and then support each other in making the necessary changes. Also, don't forget about your extended family, and, if applicable, your new, restructured family, such as stepchildren and step-grandchildren.

### Manage Your Expectations

You may find that from time to time, certain relationships are no longer able to fulfill your support needs. Disconnecting is always an option, but so is changing your expectations. Ultimately, if anyone is unable or unwilling to give the support you need, stop looking for the support there.

### A Balanced Support System

You should have people in your life who support you in pursuing the quality of life that you desire, in reaching your full potential, and in helping you through crises. When you look at your current support system, you may find that you have support only for times of crisis. This should not be the primary way you connect with people. Connect with people who have interests that are similar to yours. Look for them while pursuing some of your favorite activities – like attending worship services, traveling, mentoring, spending time with friends and working. Lean on them for support (not just in times of crises) and be supportive for them as well.

In addition to balancing the circle of your friends, balance the ages and generations of the people who you surround yourself with. The more circles you have, and the more places in which you are meaningfully connected, the easier it is going to be for you to enjoy your long life. You will be better able to cope with loss and stay passionately engaged in life.

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