

Science says:
**call your
friends.**

The Social Fitness Check-In

A science-backed look at the relationships that shape your health, your happiness, and your life.

20 MINUTES · A PEN · YOU

euda **studio**

Why this matters

In 1938, a group of Harvard researchers began asking a question no one had really studied before: what makes a life feel worth living? Not what cures illness, not what prevents collapse. Just that.

They started following 724 young men. Blood tests. Brain scans. Questionnaires every two years. Interviews with their wives, their children, their grandchildren. The study is still running today. It is the longest study of adult life ever conducted.

After more than eight decades of data, one finding keeps rising to the top. Louder than income. Louder than cholesterol. Louder than exercise, IQ, or genetics. And it's this.

The quality of your relationships is the single strongest predictor of how long and how well you will live.

That finding has been echoed by dozens of other studies. Loneliness is roughly as harmful to your body as smoking fifteen cigarettes a day. People in warm relationships in their 50s are healthier in their 80s, not just happier, physically healthier. Good relationships buffer pain. They slow cognitive decline. They help us recover from almost everything.

And here is the part most people miss:

Relationships are a habit.

Not a given. Not a fixed trait you were born with or missed out on. A habit, like the way you take care of your body. Some weeks it goes well. Some weeks it slips. And like any habit, it gets better when you pay attention to it. That's what this workbook is.

What is social fitness?

Think about physical fitness for a moment. You don't go to the gym once in January and assume you're set for life. You move, you rest, you pay attention to what your body needs, you adjust. It's ongoing. Nobody finds this strange.

Social fitness works the same way.

Relationships need tending. Not grand gestures, just attention. A voice note. A question beyond "how are you." A Sunday phone call. A coffee with the friend you keep meaning to see. The research is clear: friendships rarely end in a fight or a falling out. They fade. Quietly. Because nobody reached out.

So the aim of this workbook is not to diagnose you or to tell you that your life is lacking. It's to give you a clear picture of where you are, what's working, and where you might put a little energy next.

This workbook is

- A mirror, not a verdict
- An honest inventory
- A starting point for small shifts
- Something to come back to

This workbook isn't

- × A diagnosis or judgment
- × A reason to feel behind
- × Something to rush through
- × A substitute for real support

Take your time. Skip what doesn't fit. Come back tomorrow if today isn't the day.

How to use this workbook

This workbook moves through four parts. Together they take about twenty minutes, although you can split them across one or two sittings if you prefer. There is no right order to feel things, and no score that makes you a good or bad friend. What you will come out with is a clearer picture of your social life than most people ever stop to draw.

Here's what's coming and what each part asks of you:

I.**Your Social Circle**

Map who is in your life right now and how each person makes you feel. You will place names into three circles and tag each one with the energy they bring.

II.**Seven Angles**

Rate 42 statements across seven dimensions of connection on a scale of 1 to 5. Add up your totals and you will get a score out of 210, plus a profile showing where your social life is strong and where it may be running thin.

III.**Reflection Prompts**

Six deeper questions to sit with, write on, or come back to later. You don't have to answer all of them.

IV.**Your 7-Day Starter**

One small, doable action per day for the week ahead. None of them take more than ten minutes.

Before you begin.

Don't overthink your answers. Your first instinct is almost always the honest one. This is not a test. Nobody is grading you. The only person who will ever see this is you.

PART I

Your Social Circle

Before we look at the quality of your relationships, let's just see who's in your life. Below you'll find three circles and a tagging system. Read through the instructions first, then fill it in.

Step 1: Place your people

INNER CIRCLE	The ones you'd call at 3 a.m. Your closest relationships.
REGULAR CONTACT	The people in your weekly or monthly rhythm. Friends, family, work colleagues you see regularly.
PERIPHERY	Familiar faces. Work colleagues you pass in the corridor, neighbours, baristas, acquaintances.

Step 2: Tag each person

Once you've written everyone in, go back through the names and add a symbol next to each one. Be honest with yourself, even if that feels uncomfortable.

+	ENERGISING You feel lighter, more yourself, more alive after spending time with them.
=	NEUTRAL Fine, steady. Neither fills you up nor drains you.
-	DEPLETING You feel heavier, smaller, or more anxious after time with them. If you are completely honest with yourself, you dread the interaction beforehand.

A NOTE ON THE DEPLETING COLUMN

This doesn't automatically mean you should cut someone out. Some of the most important people in our lives, aging parents, a sibling going through a hard time, a friend in crisis, can feel depleting in a given season without being a mistake. What the tag gives you is clarity. And clarity is where things start to shift.

Step 3: Fill it in

INNER CIRCLE The ones you'd call at 3 a.m.	REGULAR CONTACT Weekly or monthly rhythm.	PERIPHERY Colleagues, neighbours, baristas.

Three questions to sit with once you've tagged everyone:

→ How many of your regular interactions land in the energising column?

→ Is there anyone in the inner circle who belongs somewhere else now, or anyone in the periphery you'd like to move closer?

→ Whose name didn't come to mind until the second or third pass, and what does that tell you?

PART II

Seven Angles

Not all relationships give us the same thing. A friend you laugh with on Friday night is not the same as the person you'd call from a hospital bed. Both matter. Both are part of a full social life. And most of us are rich in some kinds of connection and quietly running low in others, often without realising it.

The science backs this up. Different relationships meet different needs, and when one kind goes missing, you feel it, even if you can't name what's off. Below are seven angles on your social life. Rate each one honestly, add up your totals, and you'll end up with a shape, a score, and a clear sense of where you actually are right now.

One thing before you start: your total is a snapshot, not a verdict. People move through seasons. What the number gives you is somewhere useful to look next.

A NOTE ON HOW THIS WAS PUT TOGETHER

The seven dimensions in this check-in are drawn from decades of research on social support, including the work of Robert Waldinger and Marc Schulz, psychiatrists and lead researchers on the Harvard Study of Adult Development, Carolyn Cutrona and Daniel Russell, psychologists whose Social Provisions Scale is one of the most widely used measures of perceived social support, and the broader literature on connection and wellbeing. The statements are adapted for everyday self-reflection, not clinical measurement. This is not a validated psychometric instrument. It is a structured mirror: a way of looking at your social life with more intention than you might otherwise.

HOW TO RATE

For each statement, fill in the circle that feels most true right now. Be as honest as you can with yourself. Not the person you used to be or want to be. Just this season.

1 = Not true for me 2 = Rarely true 3 = Sometimes true 4 = Often true 5 = True for me

Once you have rated all six statements in a dimension, add them up and write the total in the box at the bottom. Then move on to the next dimension. Bring all seven totals together on the profile page at the end.

I

Your safe crash landing

The ones who pick up. No questions first.

Having at least one person you can call in a crisis is one of the strongest individual predictors of resilience after trauma and major life stress.

1 = Not true for me 2 = Rarely true 3 = Sometimes true 4 = Often true 5 = True for me

1 2 3 4 5

There is at least one person I could call in the middle of the night if something went very wrong.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I have someone in my life who knows the unfiltered, less curated parts of me and has not walked away.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

When something difficult happens, I know exactly who I would tell first.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I feel I can ask for help, emotionally or practically, without it costing the relationship.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

In the last six months, I have actually leaned on someone when things were hard, rather than handling it alone.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

When I am struggling, my instinct is to reach out rather than carry it alone.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Add these up. Write your total here.

_____ / 30

II

The no-performance zone

Where you don't have to be fine.

Emotional disclosure, saying the true thing rather than the managed version, is linked to lower cortisol levels, better immune function, and faster recovery from stressful events.

1 = Not true for me 2 = Rarely true 3 = Sometimes true 4 = Often true 5 = True for me

	1	2	3	4	5
There is someone in my life I can be honest with about how I actually feel, even when it is messy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

I have at least one conversation a week that goes beyond the day-to-day and small talk.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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Someone close to me has seen me cry, be afraid, or be angry in the last year.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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I do not feel I have to perform or filter myself around at least one person in my life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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With the people closest to me, I can say when I'm not okay rather than defaulting to "I'm fine."	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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After spending time with the people in my life, I generally feel like I showed up as myself rather than a managed version of me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
--	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Add these up. Write your total here.	_____ / 30				
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The ones who know your whole story

Not the résumé. The actual you.

Feeling known, as opposed to merely liked, is a distinct psychological need. People who report feeling truly known by at least one person show significantly lower rates of depression and anxiety.

1 = Not true for me 2 = Rarely true 3 = Sometimes true 4 = Often true 5 = True for me

1 2 3 4 5

Someone in my life sees who I actually am beneath the roles I play.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I have at least one person who knows my history, not just my present.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

When I share something I genuinely care about, at least one person lights up with me rather than just being polite.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I feel seen as a full person, not as a function (mother, colleague, the friend who listens).

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

In the last few months, I have shared something about my past or inner life that I rarely talk about.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I have at least one person who knows what I've been through, not just where I've ended up.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Add these up. Write your total here.

_____ / 30

IV

Loving interference

The ones who won't let you stay small.

Social relationships that include honest challenge and high expectations are associated with greater personal growth, higher goal achievement, and better long-term life satisfaction than relationships defined purely by acceptance.

1 = Not true for me 2 = Rarely true 3 = Sometimes true 4 = Often true 5 = True for me

1 2 3 4 5

Someone in my life will lovingly challenge me when I am being unfair to myself or to others.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I have at least one person whose way of thinking genuinely sharpens mine.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

My closest people want me to grow, not stay the same so they can stay comfortable.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I can name a specific conversation in the last few months that changed how I see something.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

The people closest to me are willing to disagree with me or push back when it matters.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I feel free to say what I actually think around the people closest to me.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Add these up. Write your total here.

_____ / 30

v

Your real support system

The ones you'd actually call, not just could call.

Perceived availability of practical support, knowing you could ask rather than just that someone exists, is a stronger predictor of wellbeing than the actual amount of help received.

1 = Not true for me 2 = Rarely true 3 = Sometimes true 4 = Often true 5 = True for me

	1	2	3	4	5
If I needed a practical favour right now (a lift, help moving something, help sorting something out), I know exactly who to ask.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

I have asked for practical help from someone in the last few months and it did not feel costly or awkward.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
--	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

The support in my life feels mutual. It genuinely goes both ways.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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I do not feel like I have to figure out the practicalities of my life entirely alone.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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I find it as natural to ask for help as it is to offer it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
--	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

When I need help, I follow through and ask rather than talking myself out of it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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Add these up. Write your total here.	_____ / 30				
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vi

No agenda, just pleasure

The people you do things with for absolutely no reason.

Shared positive experiences, especially laughter and play, activate the same neural bonding pathways as physical touch. Relationships without regular play tend to become purely functional over time.

1 = Not true for me 2 = Rarely true 3 = Sometimes true 4 = Often true 5 = True for me

	1	2	3	4	5
I have laughed, really laughed, with another person in the last two weeks.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

There are people in my life I do things with purely for the pleasure of it, no agenda.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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I have a standing or semi-regular ritual with someone (a walk, coffee, dinner, a call).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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I can think of something fun I have done with another person in the last month.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
---	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

When I spend time with people I care about, we actually enjoy each other rather than just catching up on problems or obligations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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I allow myself to have fun with friends without needing to earn it first.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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Add these up. Write your total here.	_____ / 30				
---	------------	--	--	--	--

VII

Where you'd be missed

The circles beyond your front door.

Belonging to at least one community beyond the household is independently associated with longer life, faster recovery from illness, and significantly lower rates of late-life depression, even when controlling for the quality of close relationships.

1 = Not true for me 2 = Rarely true 3 = Sometimes true 4 = Often true 5 = True for me

1 2 3 4 5

I feel I belong to at least one group or community beyond my household.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

There is a place or gathering where people would notice if I did not show up.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I have familiar, casual connections in daily life (a neighbour, a work colleague, a regular) that add warmth to ordinary days.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I feel part of something bigger than just my closest relationships.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

In the last month I have spent time in a group setting where I genuinely felt I belonged.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Beyond my close circle, there are spaces or groups where I feel like I genuinely belong.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Add these up. Write your total here.

_____ / 30

Your shape, your season

[illegible]

Add up your seven dimension totals.

The four seasons of social fitness

Find your total below. This is a season, not a sentence.

Quiet Season

42 – 84

Your social life is running thin right now. That can come from a recent move, a loss, burnout, new motherhood, a period of rebuilding, or simply years of putting other things first. This is not a failure. It is a signal. The most important thing you can do now is reach for one person and start small. A single message. A single coffee. Connection almost always rebuilds faster than we think it will.

Getting there

85 – 126

You have real relationships, and you also have places where the connection has loosened. This is where most people land, and it is a genuinely good place to be, because small shifts make a visible difference here. Look at your shape. One or two dimensions are probably strong, one or two are probably thinner. That's where the interesting work is.

Good shape

127 – 168

You are in a rich season of social fitness. You have safety, closeness, and people who reflect you back to yourself. The work now is not to add more. It's to protect what you have. Relationships at this level do not fade from rupture but from quiet neglect when life gets busy. Name the ones where you feel this is true and then make an effort to tend to them on purpose.

The real thing

169 – 210

You are exceptionally well-connected across many dimensions of your life. This is rare. Worth sitting with. The invitation at this level is to keep showing up with the same intention that got you here. And to look outward: who in your circle is in a quieter season right now and could benefit from you reaching out to them?

Look at your seven scores. Which dimension surprised you most, higher or lower than you expected? Write it here: _____ That's the one to focus on in Part III.

Reflection prompts

The numbers show you the shape. The questions below try to show you the why.

You don't have to answer all of them. Skip the ones that don't land. Sit with the ones that do, even if, especially if, they make you slightly uncomfortable. That feeling usually means you've touched something real.

Write in the margins, on a separate page, in your notes app. However works. This part isn't meant to be neat.

*The relationships we never question are often
the ones most in need of tending.*

01

Which relationship in your life asks more of you than it gives back?

And what keeps you in it, loyalty, guilt, history, habit, love?

02

Who haven't you reached out to in longer than you'd like to admit?

Write the first name that came to mind.

03

When was the last time you felt truly known by someone?

What was happening? Who were you with? What made you feel safe enough to let them see you?

04

Think about the last time you were with someone and picked up your phone. What were you looking for?

Was it boredom, avoidance, habit? Be honest.

05

If you went off the grid for a week, who would actually notice?

Not in a dramatic way. Just: who would reach out and ask if you were okay?

06

What is one relationship you could invest in this month, without expecting anything back?

One person. One small gesture. Nothing grand. Just a move.

Insight is the beginning. One small action is the middle. The next seven days are where this actually starts to matter.

YOUR 7-DAY SOCIAL FITNESS STARTER

Seven days. Seven small acts of tending. None of them take more than ten minutes. Most take less than two.

The point isn't to transform your social life in a week. It's to prove to yourself, in small concrete ways, that connection is buildable. That the muscle responds to use. That you have more control here than you might feel right now.

ONE RULE

Do them in any order. Skip a day if you need to. Just don't skip the whole week.

DAY 1

Send a voice note, not a text

Pick someone in your inner circle or regular contact. Send them a two-minute voice note. Something that happened today, a thought you had, a question. Anything. Voice carries warmth in a way text never quite does. And it invites one back.

DAY 2

Reach out to someone you've drifted away from

Send them a message today. Keep it simple. "How are you?" No guilt, no apology for the gap. Just a simple reach out.

DAY 3

Ask one better question

In whatever conversation you have today, replace "how are you" with something that actually invites an answer. "What's been on your mind lately?" "How's your week been, for real?" Then listen longer than feels natural.

DAY 4

Put your phone in another room

For dinner, a walk, a coffee, whatever time you normally share with someone. Just once. Notice what changes when it's not there. Notice how much more you actually see the person in front of you.

DAY 5

Ask for something small

A book recommendation. A restaurant suggestion. Help thinking through a decision. Pick someone and let them feel useful to you. People don't feel closer to us because they helped us. They feel closer because we let them.

DAY
6

Do nothing, together

Invite someone to just be in your space. No agenda, no activity, no production. Read on the couch together. Cook in silence. Walk without talking. Parallel presence is one of the most underrated forms of closeness.

DAY
7

Name it

Tell someone specifically what they mean to you. Not a speech. A sentence. "I'm glad you're in my life." "Talking to you always makes my week better." "Thank you for being the kind of person I can say this to." It will feel awkward for about four seconds. And then it will feel good for both of you for days.

Seven small moves. That's how it starts.

At the end of the week, come back to this workbook. Flip through Part II again. Notice if anything has shifted, even a little. That's the feedback loop. That's the habit.

A NOTE, FROM ME

Before you go

If you made it this far, thank you. Really.

I came to this topic through a book, but what the book did was confirm something I already knew from living it. My social connections are what got me through the hardest periods of my life. They still are. The people I feel most myself around, most safe with, most able to just be, have been and continue to be an enormous source of strength and happiness.

What surprised me was the health dimension. I hadn't fully understood how physical the impact is. Not just emotionally, but on your body, your longevity, your ability to recover from almost anything. I found that genuinely fascinating, and a little confronting.

I also know I'm lucky. Real connection is not easy to build, and not everyone starts from the same place. But even within my own close group, which I feel grateful for every day, we find it hard sometimes. The group chat is active. We send each other reels. Actually meeting in person, consistently, is harder than it should be. Life gets in the way. It always does.

This workbook came from that tension. The knowing and the still-not-quite-managing. If it gave you one name to reach out to, one small shift to make this week, it has done its job.

Big hug,

Claudia

Sources & further reading

THE FOUNDATIONAL WORK

The Good Life: Lessons From the World's Longest Scientific Study of Happiness

Robert Waldinger & Marc Schulz (2023)

The book that inspired this workbook. Based on the Harvard Study of Adult Development, the longest running study of adult life ever conducted.

What Makes a Good Life? (TED Talk)

Robert Waldinger

Fifteen minutes. Over forty-five million views. The clearest summary of the core finding.

ON FRIENDSHIP

Platonic: How the Science of Attachment Can Help You Make and Keep Friends

Marisa G. Franco (2022)

The most directly relevant book on adult friendship, grounded in attachment theory. Practical, warm, and well-researched.

Big Friendship: How We Keep Each Other Close

Ann Friedman & Aminatou Sow (2020)

A personal and honest account of what it actually takes to maintain a deep friendship over time. Very readable, very real.

ON LONELINESS

Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection

Vivek Murthy (2020)

Former U.S. Surgeon General on why loneliness is a public health crisis, and what we can do about it.

Lost Connections: Why You're Depressed and How to Find Hope

Johann Hari (2018)

An accessible, well-researched look at the social causes of depression and anxiety. Makes a compelling case for connection as the antidote.

ON ATTENTION AND THE PHONE PROBLEM

Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age

Sherry Turkle (2015)

On how smartphones have reshaped our ability to connect, and what we've lost in the process.

Stolen Focus: Why You Can't Pay Attention

Johann Hari (2022)

Broader than connection but directly relevant to the attention and presence themes in Part III.

PODCASTS

The Good Life Podcast

Robert Waldinger & Marc Schulz, adultdevelopmentstudy.org

For the research geeks. The researchers behind the Harvard Study discuss their findings in depth.

A Bit of Optimism

Simon Sinek

Several episodes directly on friendship, belonging, and what it means to show up for the people in your life.

Hidden Brain

Shankar Vedantam, NPR

Science-backed storytelling on human behaviour. The episode "Why You Need a Weak Tie" is particularly relevant to this workbook.

If you are going through a difficult time and need to talk to someone, support is available. findahelpline.com connects you to crisis resources in your country. befrienders.org offers emotional support in over 30 countries.

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