

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

# 100-year-olds share the importance of friendship for a long, happy life: 'Without your friends, where are you?'

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At 102, [Deborah Szekely](#) is just as lively as people decades younger, and her social life is booming.

In fact, one of the most important things that Szekely credits for her long life is friendship.

She speaks at her spa and fitness resort, Rancho La Puerta, which [she still helps run](#), every Wednesday, and mingles with guests several times a week. Szekely also encourages those who are looking to live a long life to “find friends who are active” and often gets her daily physical activity alongside her close friends.

“If you were to call them in the middle of night and say, ‘Help!’ [and] they’ll be in their car in five minutes. Then there’s the kind of friends that count,” Szekely tells CNBC Make It.

“Friendship is understanding your friends, helping them. You know, recommending good books, movies, things we can do together.”

And other centenarians agree. CNBC Make It spoke to several people aged 100 or older to learn what they credit for their longevity and friendship was a common theme.

## **Research shows friendship is important for happiness and longevity**

The [Harvard Study of Adult Development](#) has been running since 1938 with the goal of discovering [what makes people happy in life](#).

After 86 years of tracking the health records of more than 700 participants, researchers were able to conclude that the happiest people who live the longest have positive relationships in their life.

But not only do happy, healthy people have those connections, they also tend to them through a process that the researchers call "social fitness."

"Social fitness requires taking stock of our relationships, and being honest with ourselves about where we're devoting our time and whether we are tending to the connections that help us thrive," [Dr. Robert Waldinger and Marc Schulz](#), directors of the Harvard study, [wrote in an article](#) last year.

Treating the health of the relationships in your life like exercise by getting in reps through frequent interactions or strengthening them through deep conversation can lead to a longer, happier life, they found.