



Valentine's Day is a Great Time to Focus on Heart Health

Valentine's Day is an opportunity to show affection or celebrate romance with cards, flowers, and candy. It's a good day for sweethearts, but it can also be a reminder of how expressions of love and caring may benefit the body. Research suggests physical demonstrations of affection can improve some health factors and reduce the risk of heart disease.

The Human Touch

Research shows being touched or touching someone can activate areas of the brain that control empathy, emotions and certain social behaviors. Health experts believe touch helps communicate a sense of connection and strengthens positive emotions that enhance family, friendly and romantic relationships. Research also shows these positive aspects of relationships contribute to, and may even form a foundation for, good physical health.

Chemical Romance

Hugging, touching, kissing and sexual activity can boost levels of oxytocin, a hormone causing relaxation and calmness. Research suggests this bodily chemical has many heart-related health benefits, including the ability to:

- Lower blood pressure and heart rate
- Decrease stress by lowering levels of cortisol, a chemical known as the "stress hormone"
- Reduce inflammation in heart tissue and possibly repair cells in the heart muscle
- Improve your sleep cycle

Pain Relief is Stress Relief

In general, prolonged pain can have harmful effects on the heart and circulatory system. If chronic pain isn't managed, heart tissue and blood vessels can be damaged. Sudden surges of pain release adrenalin, a hormone that increases heart rate and blood pressure. The good news is the touch of a loved one – holding hands, for example – can reduce the sensation of pain, research suggests. Touch can also reduce anxiety and stress caused by injury or chronic pain.

Helping Others Helps You

There's research to support the expression, "A helping heart is a healthy heart." Some studies suggest doing volunteer work can reduce depression and elevate moods, possibly because such work helps create bonds with others. Volunteer work also has been linked to longer life. People who suffer from chronic illness may also feel less pain when helping others.

Your Four-Legged Valentine

Pet owners understand there's no need for cards and candy to share love with their furry friends. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), studies show the bond between people and their pets is linked to health benefits such as lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol levels and decreased feelings of loneliness and anxiety.

In This Together

Touching and hugs can remind the brain of familiar feelings of comfort and affection, for both the giver and the receiver. Among couples, this can lead to stronger bonds and more positive emotions. Studies show couples who share higher levels of connection tend to make more heart-healthy choices and engage in healthier behaviors.

Sources <https://www.nih.gov/>, <https://www.cdc.gov/index.htm>,
www.uab.edu/medicine/home



It's Valentine's Day!

Valentine's is a great time to come together and celebrate love—and there are a lot more ways to do that than is typically associated with the holiday! Love is about expressing compassion, generosity, and kindness to others.

Join us Wednesday, February
14th, @12pm CST

to learn how you can make a difference and support and encourage stroke survivors and their families by volunteering for the Stroke Survivor 2 Survivor (SS2S) telephone peer support program. The program is run by stroke survivor or stroke caregiver volunteers with special training and overseen by a local hospital on-site coordinator.

ZOOM LINK: [Click Here!](#)

The American Stroke Association (ASA) and Stroke Survivors Empowering Each Other (SSEEO) recognize the stroke experience can feel traumatic and lonely and want to ensure survivors and caregivers know they are not alone. That is why our organizations are working together to provide the SS2S program at no charge to hospitals across the nation. To learn more visit

<https://www.stroke.org/en/professionals/stroke-survivor-2-survivor>

Stroke Learning Group Presenters: Aurora Quigley, MPH, CHES®, National Program Lead, Stroke, American Stroke Association, and Christine Winiecki, SSEEO, Director



Stroke Survivors Empowering Each Other and the American Stroke Association's Together to End Stroke – collaborating to beat stroke.



American Stroke Association,
A division of the American Heart Association.

Together to End Stroke®

2/14 12pm Zoom Link

Click [here](#) to learn more about SS2S



Save The Date



20 YR ANNIVERSARY FUNDRAISER & EDUCATIONAL EVENT

SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 2024 | 9 AM - 12 PM
LAKE FOREST HOSPITAL

Tell Us How We Can Help!

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Click [here](#) to send requests and suggestions!

SSEEO

P.O. Box 855 Lombard, IL 60148
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SSEEO Program Flyer
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