

Just one quality conversation with a friend boosts daily well-being, study shows

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Conversing with a friend just once during the day to catch up, joke around or tell them you're thinking of them can increase your happiness and lower your stress level by day's end.

These are among the results of a new study co-written by Jeffrey Hall, University of Kansas professor of communication studies and friendship expert.

"Quality Conversation Can Increase Daily Well-Being" was published in the journal *Communication Research* by Hall and co-authors Amanda Holmstrom, Natalie Pennington, Evan Perrault and Daniel Totzkay. The study was informed by and provides further support for Hall's Communicate Bond Belong (CBB) theory of relationships. Hall is the director of KU's Relationships and Technology Lab.

"This paper was an attempt to define quality communication in the context of relationships," Hall said. "The types of communication we chose to study were ones shown in past research to make people feel more bonded through [conversation](#)."

They studied seven types of communication:

- Catching up
- Meaningful talk
- Joking around
- Showing care
- Listening
- Valuing others and their opinions
- Offering sincere compliments

Over 900 study participants from five university campuses—before, during and after pandemic lockdowns—were directed to engage in one of the seven communication behaviors on a single day, then report back that night about their feelings of stress, connection, anxiety, well-being, loneliness and the quality of their day.

As it turned out, Hall said, it didn't matter which of these quality

conversations someone had. The very act of intentionally reaching out to a friend in one of these ways was what mattered most.

"One of the take-home messages of this study is that there are many paths toward the same goal," Hall said.

He said the study also was designed to explore the effects of both the quality and quantity of daily communications.

"There's a lot of good research that says the number of interactions you have as well as the quality of interactions are both associated with being a less lonely, happier and more connected person," Hall said.

This study found that once is enough, but more is better. Participants who chose to have more quality conversations had better days.

"This means the more that you listened to your friends, the more that you showed care, the more that you took time to value others' opinions, the better you felt at the end of the day," he said.

"The [experimental design](#) means that it's not just people who are already having fulfilling lives who have higher-quality conversations," Hall said. "This study suggests that anyone who makes time for high-quality conversation can improve their well-being. We can change how we feel on any given day through communication. Just once is all it takes."

The study also brought in Hall's past research on different ways to connect in the era of social and mobile media. The study found high-quality, face-to-face communication was more closely associated with well-being than electronic or social media contact.

"If at least one of their quality conversations was face-to-face, that mattered," Hall said.

The paper also explains why quality communication makes people feel better. CBB theory claims that people use conversations with friends to help meet their need to belong.

"Across these three studies, quality conversation mattered most for connection and stress," Hall said. "This supports the idea that we use [communication](#) to get our need to belong met, and, in doing so, it helps us manage our stress."

What is exciting about this research, Hall said, is that it shows there are a host of good things that come along with just one good conversation with a [friend](#). This drives home the point that making time for quality conversation makes our days better.

More information: Jeffrey A. Hall et al, Quality Conversation Can Increase Daily Well-Being, *Communication Research* (2023). [DOI: 10.1177/00936502221139363](#)

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