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## Staying Connected with Friends and Family

Contributed by Alberta Ellison

Everyone wants to stay active and healthy regardless of their age. Did you know that the more you stay involved in outside activities and spend time with your friends and family the happier and more content you will be?

We all need to feel "needed" and we are creatures that need companionship on a regular basis. It is not natural or healthy for us to be constantly alone but as we age we tend to isolate ourselves. We are always worried that we are butting into someone else's time or that we are being a burden to others. This is the wrong way to view your interaction with friends and family and you should try to be more active when it comes to outside activities.

To ensure that you stay connected to your friends and family will take some effort on your part. You need to remember that while your schedule is open many others are juggling with work and family commitments.

Try to schedule regular visits or time with your friends. Some ways that you can do this might include planning a weekly visit with different friends to play cards, go to a movie or to lunch. If you have many friends this will allow you to go out several times during the week. You can even coordinate a book club where everyone gets together once a month to talk about your latest book.

Remaining a welcomed family member can take a bit of tact and diplomacy. You want to make sure that you are not spending too much time with family members because you do not want them to start "dreading" your next visit. So, try a few different ways to be more involved.

When dealing with your family's busy schedule you can volunteer to help transport a child to one of their sporting events and you can stay and watch. Schedule a time and place after the game for everyone to meet and to have lunch at a familiar restaurant or even plan a picnic.

Schedule special events that will be held at your own home during the year—these can include Easter, Thanksgiving and other holiday that you want. Plan for a special dinner where the entire family can gather and spend time together. You will enjoy the interaction of everyone from the youngest to oldest members of the family and will have an opportunity to host them in your own home.

Offer to baby sit once a month so that the parents can go out for an evening without the children. This gives them an opportunity to relax and be with other adults and allows you quality time with your grandchildren.

If you are passionate about a particular cause, get everyone involved to work for a day as a volunteer or to walk in a charity to raise money. Ask your friends and family to participate, to sponsor you financially or to be there to provide morale support.

The more active you are with friends and family, the more opportunities there will be for you to meet new people and make new friends.

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Ms. Ellison recently retired from the Government Accountability Office after 37 years of service. A graduate of George Mason University, she devoted the majority of her career to working with senior level auditors from around the world who came to participate in GAO's International Auditor Training Program. In retirement she is enjoying traveling, writing and spending time with her family.