

SOCIAL NETWORK IN UNIVERSITY



Engineering curriculums are known to be intensive and with that much coursework it can be easy to put extracurriculars and social gatherings aside.

You are not alone if you are lacking a sense of belonging or if you are experiencing loneliness. With that being said, there is lots that can be done to create and maintain a social support network!

Tips for creating and maintaining your social support network in university

MAKE IT A PRIORITY



TIP: Set aside time specifically devoted to building and strengthening your social support network.



Exactly as you would schedule classes or meetings, schedule time to spend with your friends, family, significant other, or other social supports on a regular basis. Even dedicating one evening per week to this can be very beneficial and can help you feel uplifted, re-energized, and better prepared to take on your other responsibilities.^{4,6,10}

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY



TIP: A few strong, close bonds can be more valuable than having a multitude of social connections.



It may seem difficult or even impossible to make a large number of new friends in university given class sizes, workload, and numerous other barriers. Fortunately, finding a few friends with whom you can closely connect can actually be more valuable than having many, more distant connections.^{2,3}

MAINTAIN EXISTING CONNECTIONS



TIP: When possible, build upon your existing social support network rather than creating an entirely new one.



Remember that you can always maintain old connections while making new ones. Even in instances where these existing social supports reside in entirely different cities or countries, maintaining contact and continuing to nurture your relationships with them can provide you with great comfort and support.^{1,5}

EXPLORE THE RESOURCES AROUND YOU



TIP: As an engineering student, you belong to faculty and departmental associations; explore what they offer.



Check out the social events that your faculty is organizing to meet other like-minded peers, or visit the engineering student support center, where social integration is one of their goals.

JOIN AN ONLINE COMMUNITY



TIP: Join an online community to build relationships with people who have similar interests.



Not everyone has time to join clubs or committees at the university, or sometimes it can be difficult to find others with similar interests. Joining an online community around a common hobby can be a great way to connect with other people.^{8,9,11}

PRACTICE SELF-COMPASSION



TIP: Be compassionate towards yourself and mindful of your inner narrative.



A common misconception is that we are alone in our struggle to make friends and create a support network in university. In fact, many other university students are dealing with this challenge! Do not judge yourself harshly in this process, and give others a chance as well. Try to persist in remaining open to new connections.⁷