# Can Poor Social Skills Negatively Affect Overall Health?

November 9, 2017

Poor social skills have long been associated with mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety. But the inability to communicate with others or establish meaningful relationships can also lead to stress and loneliness, which may affect an individual's physical health, according to new findings published in the journal Health Communication, reports UANews.

For the study, Chris Segrin, PhD, a behavioral scientist at the University of Arizona (UA) and head of the school's department of communication, examined data from an online survey of a nationally representative group of 775 people, ages 18 to 91, who were asked to respond to questions designed to measure social skills, stress, loneliness and mental and physical health.

Segrin focused on four specific indicators of good social skills: the ability to provide emotional support to others; self-disclosure, or the ability to share personal information with others; negative assertion skills, or the ability to stand up to unreasonable requests from others; and relationship initiation skills, or the ability to introduce yourself to others and get to know them.

Results showed that participants with deficiencies in these particular capabilities were likely to experience more stress, loneliness and poorer overall mental and physical health. One problem is that individuals with poor social skills "don't see themselves as a problem," Segrin said. "They're walking around with this health risk factor and they're not even aware of it."

He also believes that technology impedes social competency in people, especially youth. To counter this effect, he suggested that parents limit screen time and expose their children to situations that require face-to-face interaction.

Additionally, Segrin noted that social skills could be improved through therapy, counseling and even social skills training. He concluded that future research should investigate how social skills might affect other aspects of health and influence people contending with chronic illness.

Click here to learn how social isolation and loneliness might be deadlier than obesity.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.