longevity in action
stay connected

# Facilitator Preparation (What You’ll Need)

* Stay connected worksheets
* Writing utensils
* A copy of Dr. Roger Landry’s *Live Long, Die Short: A Guide to Authentic Health and Successful Aging* (optional)

# Session Content:

Please read this aloud:

*Live Long, Die Short* references “Blue Zones” or areas around the world where extreme longevity is much more common than in other societies. In areas of Okinawa, Sardinia, Costa Rica and Greece, there are common characteristics of those who live long. Two of those characteristics are 1) family is put ahead of other concerns, and 2) people of all ages are socially active and integrated into their communities. In today’s session, we will be exploring this concept of staying connected further.

A few reminders before we begin …

* Please be respectful to one another. Everyone in this room comes from a different background that has formulated who they are as a person and contributed to their unique opinions. As a group, we will observe *respect* as a guiding principle as we interact with one another. It is our goal that all participants feel valued, respected, and heard.
* Share without imposing your beliefs on others. Please refrain from convincing others to adopt your opinions.
* Keep an open mind. Our discussions will be thought-provoking and insightful. You may not agree with everything you hear, but please be willing to consider opinions that may be different from your own.

# Today’s Objectives:

Please share these objectives with participants.

* To learn the mental and physical benefits of social connection.
* To explore how we socialize – and how often.
* To look for ways to connect with others on a regular basis.

# Opening Passage: Wired to Be Together

Read this excerpt from *Live Long, Die Short* aloud: Page 109.

The Masai people of East Africa—whose “Life is change” maxim I cited earlier—have another saying: “We are not human unless we are with other humans.” As we noted earlier, for most of the time we have walked the earth, we have walked with others. We did it for survival, and some- where along the way, this basic need to be with others seems to have been encoded in our very DNA. We thrive with others. We seek out others. Of course, this need is consistent with the principle of nature that those characteristics associated with higher rates of survival are perpetuated. Our ancestors were extremely socially connected. It was an absolute necessity, and those that did not band with others did not survive.

We all can easily observe that, for the most part, we are happier with others. Yes, our fellow humans can sometimes make us want to tear our hair out. We can annoy each other, hurt each other, be less than noble to each other, but there remains a magnetic attraction that is deeper than personal preference. When faced with a choice between being alone or with others, most of us, most of the time, choose people. This is, again, at the core of our human needs, of our authentic self.

Read this excerpt from *Live Long, Die Short* aloud: Page 111

During my time as a student at the National Defense University in Wash- ington, DC, I was privileged to travel to the then Soviet Union as part of the curriculum. I was there specifically to observe the Soviet medical system, and I was able to visit Moscow, Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad), Tbilisi in Georgia, and Saint Petersburg. During our visit in Moscow, our group toured several large apartment buildings built during the Khrush- chev years and which housed hundreds of people. These buildings had paper-thin walls, and as we walked the hallways, we could hear babies cry- ing, televisions, conversations, music, and dogs barking. When we returned to the bus, I asked the guide how it was possible to live with such noise and lack of privacy. I remember her answer to the word. “In Russia, our winters are long and cold. To hear a human voice on the other side of the wall is comforting.” Yes, we are indeed wired that way.

# Group Discussion

Please read this aloud:

# I’d like to open up a discussion about the ways we are social in our culture. Please choose some or all of these questions as part of the day’s discussion (if necessary, please remind participantsto be respectful by limiting answers to less than a minute so that more people have time to share):

# Question: What is one special custom or tradition that you share with family members or friends? *(e.g. Some examples might be a weekly Sunday brunch, or a special holiday celebration.)*

# Question: What are some of the barriers to being socially connected? *(e.g. Social connection during Covid? Do we worry about gossip? Are we concerned how people will judge what we say?)* How can we overcome these barriers or support others who are facing those barriers?

# Question: During Covid, were you surprised at the people you found yourself reaching out to stay connected? And, did you find your connection stronger during the pandemic?

# Question: Can you think of three people you can call on at 2am, if you need someone? Social science research shows us that this level of social connection is what supports our resilience.

# Question: Who in your life makes you feel good about yourself?

# Question: Conversely, can you think of people in your life who drain you of energy and make you feel bad about yourself? If so, how do you handle this?

# Group Activity: Where I’m From

Please read this aloud:

I’d like to share a poem with you that was written by George Ella Lyon entitled “Where I’m From.” Afterward, I invite you to write our own “Where I’m From” poem. We may not finish them today, but there will be an opportunity to share them at a future Resilience session. Note: You may choose to post completed poems on a bulletin board for others to enjoy.

**Where I'm From**

**By George Ella Lyon**

I am from clothespins,
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.
I am from the dirt under the back porch.
(Black, glistening,
it tasted like beets.)
I am from the forsythia bush
the Dutch elm
whose long-gone limbs I remember
as if they were my own.

I'm from fudge and eyeglasses,
 from Imogene and Alafair.
I'm from the know-it-alls
 and the pass-it-ons,
from Perk up! and Pipe down!
I'm from He restoreth my soul
 with a cottonball lamb

and ten verses I can say myself.

I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch,
fried corn and strong coffee.
From the finger my grandfather lost
 to the auger,
the eye my father shut to keep his sight.

Under my bed was a dress box
spilling old pictures,
a sift of lost faces
to drift beneath my dreams.
I am from those moments--
snapped before I budded --
leaf-fall from the family tree.

On the worksheets we handed out, you’ll see a template to create your own “Where I’m From Poem.” With it you can create a piece of writing that represents specific moments in your life that contribute to who you are today. You can choose words that have meaning to you, or even the first word or idea that pops into your head. This poem is all about you! See where it takes you.

*(Note to Facilitator: This can be an excellent intergenerational and multi-cultural activity as well. For example, if you have invited high school students to participate, how might their poems differ from participants? What are similarities that all people share?)*

**The WHERE I'M FROM Template**

I am from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (specific ordinary item),

from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (product name) and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (product name).

I am from the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (home description... adjective, sensory detail).

I am from the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (plant, flower, natural item), the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (plant, flower, natural detail).

I am from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (family tradition) and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (family trait),

from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (name of family member) and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (another family name) and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (family name).

I am from the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (description of family tendency) and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (another one).

From \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (something you were told as a child) and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (another).

I am from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (representation of religion, or lack of it).

I'm from\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (place of birth and family ancestry), \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (two food items representing your family).

From the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (specific family story about a specific person and detail), the\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (another detail), and the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (another detail about another family member).

I am from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (location of family pictures, mementos, archives and several more lines indicating their worth).

*(Visit* [*https://bit.ly/3nFWNoW*](https://bit.ly/3nFWNoW) *to learn more about George Ella Lyon and purchase copies of some of her other workshop activities for adults.)*

# Group Discussion About Your Activity

(If necessary, please remind participants to be respectful by limiting answers to about a minute so that more people have time to share.)

* Question: Would anyone like to read their poem aloud?
* Question: What did you enjoy most about this experience?
* Question: Was there anything that surprised you?

# Wrapping Up Today’s Session

Please read this aloud:

Thank you, everyone, for being here to share your time and your thoughts with each other. We look forward to many more insightful opportunities and discussions from *Live Long, Die Short* about building resilience. As a reminder, our next session is scheduled for [Day – Date – Time – Location]. Our topic is [Topic Name]. You are welcome and encouraged to bring a friend, but please RSVP for both of you. The sign-up sheet is located [Location]. Additionally, if you would like to assist with facilitating next week’s session or a future session, please let me know.

Before you go, please take a few minutes to write down a brief journal entry about today’s session. It can be anything from notes you’d like to remember or a personal initiative you might like to take. Before each entry, you’ll notice a couple of questions to think about, and you’ll have the opportunity to sum up this session in a simple word or phrase. Your journal is for your eyes only. Remember, I am always available to help answer any additional questions you may have about this journey.