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Talking With Others May Make You Smarter

Time spent socializing raised peoples' test scores, researchers say

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SUNDAY, Nov. 18 (HealthDay News) -- The gift of gab could boost brainpower, new research suggests.

A U.S. team found that talking to another person for 10 minutes a day improves memory and test scores.

They found that "socializing was just as effective as more traditional kinds of mental exercise in boosting memory and intellectual performance," lead author Oscar Ybarra, a psychologist at the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, said in a prepared statement.

In one investigation, they analyzed data on 3,610 people, ages 24 to 96.

They found that the higher their level of social interaction, the better their cognitive functioning. Social interaction included getting together or having phone chats with relatives, friends and neighbors.

In another experiment, the researchers conducted lab tests on 76 college students, ages 18 to 21, to assess how social interactions and intellectual exercises affected the results of memory and mental performance tests.

The students were divided into three groups: The social interaction group had a discussion of a social issue for 10 minutes before taking the tests; the intellectual activities group completed three tasks (including a reading comprehension exercise and a crossword puzzle) before the tests; and a control group watched a 10-minute clip of the *Seinfeld* television show.

"We found that short-term social interaction lasting for just 10 minutes boosted participants' intellectual performance as much as engaging in so-called 'intellectual' activities for the same amount of time," Ybarra said.

The findings suggest that having a friendly chat with someone each day may be as helpful as staying mentally sharp as doing a daily crossword puzzle.

The study was expected to be published in the February 2008 issue of the journal *Personality*

and Social Psychology Bulletin.

More information

McGill University has more about [memory and learning](#).

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