



# GENERATIONS NOW

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*by Lisa LaMagna, September, 2024*

*Summary: PACE has unique advantages over other health plans. One advantage is a broad view of health that includes social health. In this article, I dive into:*

- *"Social Health" as a concept*
- *discuss social styles*
- *Strategies for PACE marketing*
- *Messaging for PACE enrollment*
  
- *Ideas for PACE outreach*

*I much prefer "social health" to "socialization" or "socialized" though I caution that "social health" could become its own jargon.*

## **Social Health, Socialization in PACE**

Social health plays a vital role in overall well-being, especially for older adults.

As Kasley Killam explains in her book *"The Art and Science of Connection,"* meaningful social connections can help people live healthier, longer lives.

For many seniors, particularly those with frailty or chronic health conditions, maintaining these connections can be a challenge.

This is where PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) shines.

PACE is exceptional healthcare. And part of that healthcare is social health. By creating a community space, engaging activities, and personalized care, PACE builds social interaction. This improves the

quality of life for PACE participants.

## What Is Social Health?

According to Killam, social health refers to:

*our ability to form meaningful relationships, feel connected to others, and contribute to our communities.*

For older adults, staying socially engaged is linked to better mental and physical health.

Social isolation, on the other hand, can lead to feelings of loneliness, depression, and even a decline in physical health.

For participants in PACE, many of whom are managing functional or clinical frailty, maintaining social connections is a key part of their overall health and happiness.

## PACE: Exceptional Healthcare With A Unique Focus on Social Health

PACE is an exceptional medical care provider— which includes social, emotional, and cognitive care.

The day centers provide opportunities for participants to interact, share meals, join group activities, and build friendships. **This is created through the expertise and care provided by PACE recreational therapists.**

These social opportunities are crucial for participants who might otherwise experience isolation because of mobility limitations, or limited access to outside communities. In plain language, "it's hard to get out of the house."

Testimonials from PACE participants echo these benefits:

- *"I feel like I have a new family here. I don't feel lonely anymore."*

- *"The activities keep me busy, but it's the people who make me want to come back every day."*

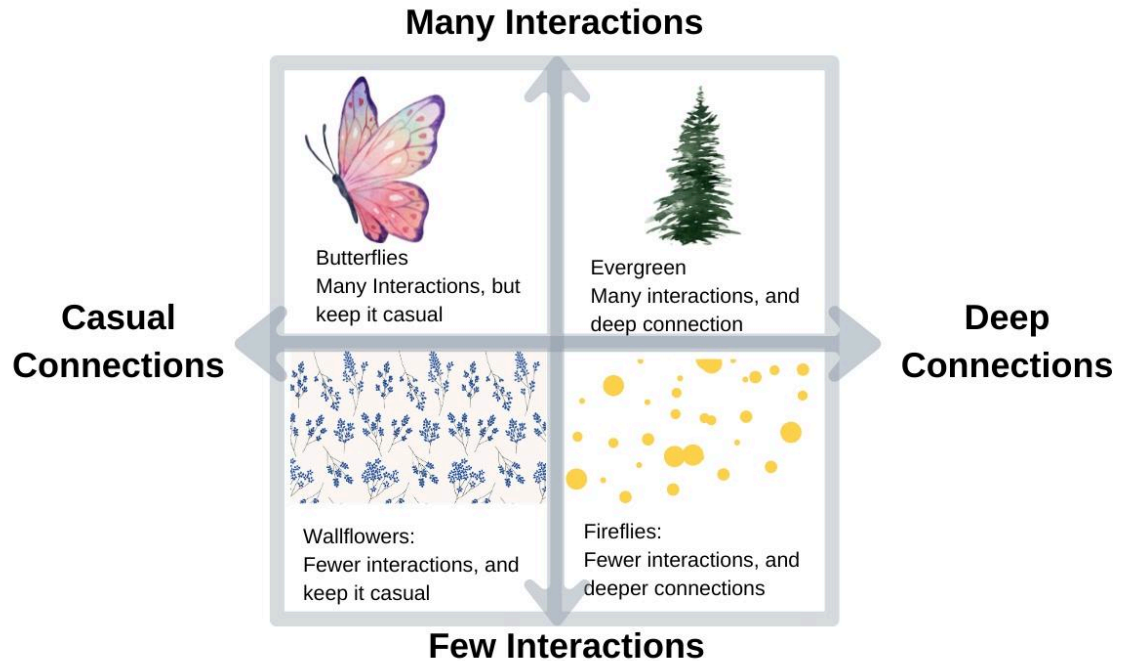
By fostering social connections, PACE helps participants experience a sense of belonging, which can have ripple effects on their overall well-being.

## The Four Styles of Social Health

The recreational therapists of PACE tailor activities and experiences for participants' individual needs. In her book, Killam identifies **four styles of social health**, showing that people connect in different ways:

1. **Butterfly**: These individuals thrive in social settings and love meeting new people. They are often outgoing and enjoy group activities or events that allow them to move from one conversation to another.
2. **Evergreen**: Evergreens value deeper, longer-term relationships. They prefer smaller gatherings where they can strengthen their bonds with a close group of friends.
3. **Wallflower**: Wallflowers tend to be more reserved and might feel overwhelmed in large social settings. They still value connection but prefer quieter, one-on-one interactions.
4. **Firefly**: Fireflies enjoy bursts of social interaction but need time to recharge afterward. They like to participate in group activities but benefit from having downtime to themselves.

PACE excels at catering to all these styles, offering both group activities and individual connections through staff members, caregivers, and peers.



*Social Health Styles, as described by Kasley Killam, MPH, in "The Art and Science of Connection." Courtesy: Generations Now.*

### The Four Domains of PACE Activities

The highly trained recreational therapists at PACE centers focus on four key domains to engage participants and foster connection:

1. **Cognitive:** Activities like trivia games, reading clubs, and memory exercises keep the mind sharp and provide social opportunities as participants work together or share knowledge.
2. **Physical:** While PACE participants may experience functional limitations, there are still physical activities that encourage movement, such as tai chi, chair yoga, stretching, and light walking, often done in group settings that promote connection.
3. **Emotional:** Emotional well-being is supported through activities like group discussions, art therapy, karaoke and music sessions, which provide a space for participants to express feelings and share experiences.

4. **Sensory:** Sensory activities, such as gardening, aromatherapy, or tactile-based projects like crafting, help engage participants and encourage interaction in a soothing environment.

These activities are carefully designed to meet the needs of PACE participants while fostering social interaction, even for those who may have difficulty engaging in more traditional group activities.

## 5 Marketing Ideas for PACE's Focus on Connection

To communicate the importance of social connection without using the term "social health," PACE can incorporate these five ideas into its marketing campaigns:

1. **Highlight Stories of Friendship:** Share real stories from participants who have made meaningful connections at the center, emphasizing the sense of community and belonging they've found.
2. **Show Group Gatherings:** Focus on group activities where participants are engaging in crafts, discussions, or meals together, showcasing the fun and connection at the center.
3. **Feature Family-Like Atmosphere:** Emphasize how PACE centers offer a supportive, welcoming environment where everyone feels like family.
4. **Promote Emotional Support:** Highlight the emotional benefits of PACE, showing how participants feel understood, supported, and cared for by both staff and peers.
5. **Talk About "Daily Connections":** Frame the daily social interactions and routine check-ins that PACE participants experience as an integral part of their care.

We can bring PACE to more people by simplifying, using stories, connecting emotionally and -- when appropriate -- using data.

## Strategies for PACE Outreach, Enrollment and Intake

### How Enrollment Can Talk about "The Center"

We don't want to add any more jargon to our conversations about PACE. "Social Health" should not become another term we inject into conversations with elders and their families (do you agree? disagree? I'd love to hear your comment).

That said, there are ways to elevate the idea of social health, when we speak about the center.

### Phrases to Communicate the Benefits of Community at PACE

Here are some conversational phrases that a PACE enrollment rep can use in conversation with an older adult (or their family caregiver) that I think help convey the warmth and caring of the PACE team and participants.

*"It feels like a second family here. You'll always have someone nearby who cares."*

*"You'll feel like you belong right away. This is a place where everyone is welcome."*

*"We have a wonderful group of people here. Folks make new friends."*

*"You won't have to worry about feeling alone. Every day, there's someone here to chat with or enjoy a meal together."*

*"It's a friendly place where you can spend time with nice people."*

*"We look out for everyone here."*

## **Remove "socialization" from PACE Jargon**

A phrase that is sometimes used in PACE enrollment conversations - with family caregivers and referral sources -- is, "they get socialization here."

I am going to invite you to put that phrase aside.

This phrase "get socialization" or "get socialized" or "socialized" is awkward, confusing or "otherizing" (separate "us" from "them").

Have you yourself ever gone out with friends "to get socialized?" Instead, you "meet people" or "have a good day" or "spend time with people" or simply "see people."

## **6 Conversational Questions for PACE Enrollment and Intake Reps**

I always say, **"Enrollment is the Start of Person-Centered Care"** (and please quote me on that! - Lisa LaMagna).

Enrollment professionals can get a sense of a potential PACE participant's social style through simple, conversational questions. Here are five examples that can help reveal how the person likes to connect:

*"Do you like spending time with just one or two friends, or do you enjoy bigger group activities?"*

*"If you were having a birthday party, who would you invite?"*

*"What makes you feel the happiest when you're around*

*other people?”*

*“Are there any group activities you’ve done in the past that you enjoyed?”*

*“Would you say you’re someone who likes meeting new people, or do you prefer keeping close with a few good friends?”*

*“What would make you excited to visit a place where you can spend time with others during the day?”*

Make note of their answers. Ask follow up questions. And be sure to include these in the information you share with the rest of the team.

### **PACE Outreach Conversations with PACE Community Partners**

When you are meeting referral partners in the community - and even with some family caregivers -- it's good to Know Your Data (and also have great stories of your participants). Here is data about older adults:

1. PACE gets participants out of the house, we give them community and recreational therapy designed to support their health.
2. Seniors who stay socially active have a 50% lower risk of dementia.
3. Loneliness raises the risk of early death by 26%. PACE brings people together, and out of their house.
4. Seniors who are socially isolated have a 29% higher chance of heart disease.
5. Older adults with strong social connections are 30% less likely to be hospitalized.

6. Social isolation increases dementia risk by 50%.

## Why PACE Is Much More Than a Day Center

It's important to never lead with "we have a day center" when talking about PACE. While the day center is a valuable part of the program, it's not the core of what makes PACE unique. Leading with the "day center" can give the impression that PACE is primarily a social program, which risks diminishing the exceptional healthcare services that are at the heart of PACE.

The day center supports participants by providing social engagement and activities, but these are always secondary to the high-quality, coordinated medical care that PACE offers. The focus should always be on PACE's integrated healthcare model, where doctors, nurses, and specialists work together to deliver comprehensive care. This medical focus is what truly sets PACE apart from other programs.

When discussing PACE, the healthcare aspect should **always** come first, with the day center positioned as one of the many supportive services that help improve participants' overall well-being. By making healthcare the central message, it's easier to communicate the full value that PACE provides to older adults and their families.

## Data That Support PACE's "Social Health" Benefits

In the Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly, we don't always need to use PACE-specific data to showcase our benefits. General studies will suffice. If you need references, start here:

["Seniors who stay socially active have a 50% lower risk of dementia."](#) Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review."

["Social isolation increases dementia risk by 50%."](#) Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults: Opportunities for the Health Care System.

["Loneliness raises the risk of early death by 26%."](#) Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors for Mortality: A Meta-Analytic Review.

["Seniors who are socially isolated have a 29% higher chance of heart disease."](#) Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors for Coronary Heart Disease and Stroke: Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of Longitudinal Observational

Studies. *Heart*

["Older adults with strong social connections are 30% less likely to be hospitalized."](#) Social Disconnectedness, Perceived Isolation, and Health among Older Adults.

Lisa LaMagna has 16 years experience in helping PACE organizations grow census. She has deep knowledge in messaging, sales, marketing and mission-critical communications. Lisa also has a deep understanding of financial sustainability from her prior work as an investment banker. Lisa has a Bachelor of Science in Finance from SUNY Buffalo. Find [Lisa on LinkedIn](#).

Generations Now consults with PACE organizations to create concrete, action-oriented growth strategies. Our signature program, the Empathy Enrollment Method, helps the entire leadership and marketing, enrollment and intake teams to simplify their messaging, build confidence and double (yes double) enrollments. Connect with us at [GenerationsNow.net](#)