Social Isolation Resource Guide

Updated 10/16/20 (changes from previous edition indicated in red)

This guide was created by Area Agency on Aging of Dane County. A special thanks to Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc. and Dane County Focal Points for sharing resources. This guide is meant to be used as a tool to help combat social isolation and loneliness in older adults. Please contact Alyce Miller with questions or additional information (261-5678 or miller.alyce@countyofdane.com).

Wellness Calls

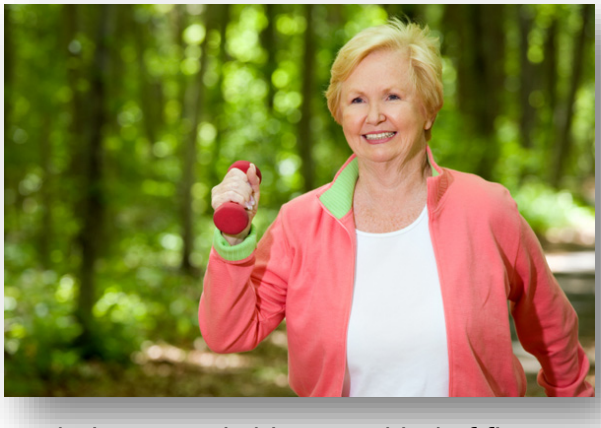
While "Safer at Home" continues, many older adults long for social connection. Words are powerful, they can inspire hope, offer encouragement and strength. Consider asking older adults and caregivers to share words of encouragement with their peers. This allows them to give back and have a purpose. It's a great way to instill a sense of community and connectedness even when we are apart. Many people want to volunteer and utilizing them to make calls, emails, or texts is a win-win-win for them, the older adult, and our agencies.

Scripts/Conversation Starters

- Nutrition Education & Activities—Click on Activities-Conversation Starters > Conversation Starter SparkCards
- Sample Telephone Reassurance Instructions & Checklist—Click on links listed on the right

Physical Activity

1. **Go4Life**—Go4Life, an exercise and physical activity campaign from the National Institute on Aging (NIH), is designed to help you fit exercise and physical activity into your daily life. This comprehensive website offers free videos and tips on endurance, strength, balance and flexibility activities. Participants can also sign up to receive motivation and fitness tips directly to their inbox. The Go4Life website (https://go4life.nia.nih.gov/) offers free tracking tools such as weekly exercise and physical activity plan, and goal setting worksheets.
    - Go4Life 15 Minute Sample Workouts
    - Go4Life 20 Minute Sample Workouts
2. **Daily Wellness Challenge**
    - Wellness Challengers & Trackers
    - Workplace Wellness Challenges
    - Aging Mastery
3. Printable Exercises
4. Sliver Sneakers Yoga (7 minutes)



5. **Utilize Zoom, GoToMeeting, etc.**—Set up "Zoomba" classes, chair yoga, tai chi, or any kind of fitness class via video chat.
6. The New York Times 6 Minute Workout
7. YMCA Health and Fitness Videos
8. WIHA Physical Activity Resources & WIHA Falls Prevention Resources

9. StrongBodies—Exercise video with strength training exercises designed to maintain fitness and to increase both strength and bone density.
10. Madison School & Community Recreation Fitness 50+—Playlist of 8 exercise classes for 50+
11. Senior Exercises Online
12. HASFit YouTube—Station offering exercise workouts for seniors and those with limited mobility.
13. Deliver Rehab—Move! Exercise videos for seniors.
14. SASC Yoga Classes with Stoughton Yoga—Stoughton Area Senior Center offering yoga classes on YouTube!

Brain Health

1. **Trivia or Question of the Day**
   - Trivia Games for Seniors
   - Sing-along for Seniors



2. The Libby App—allows library patrons to access free eBooks, audiobooks, music and videos from your local public library onto your phone or tablet for free.
3. **Brain Teasers**
   - Download
   - Print
   - Thinkable Puzzles
   - Fun Brain Teasers
   - Free Unblocked Games



4. **Weekly Guided Meditations: Healthy Minds Innovations, Inc. (HMI)**—Founded by world-renowned neuro-scientist Dr. Richard Davidson from the Center for Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, HMI is dedicated to cultivating well-being and relieving suffering through a scientific understanding of the mind. These virtual events are free and open to the public. All are welcome! Please "like" and visit Healthy Minds Innovations on Facebook to see a schedule of all guided meditations offered: http://facebook.com/pg/HealthyMindsInnovations/events/
5. Badger Talks—UW Connects brings the resources of the University of Wisconsin-Madison to citizens of Wisconsin. The program brings the Wisconsin Idea to life.
6. Campus for Creative Aging—A variety of classes and programs for older adults
7. COVID-19: Resilient Wisconsin—Resource from Wisconsin Department of Health Services
8. Music Therapy Program for Older Adults and Caregivers—Middleton Music Therapy Services, LLC provides one-on-one therapeutic care with a board certified music therapist to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals. This program is funded through the Caring for Caregivers grant. Recipients must have a smart phone (android or iPhone), tablet, laptop, or desktop computer with a working camera. Applications are made by contacting Jane De Broux (261-5679 or Debroux.Jane@countyofdane.com).

9. **Mental Health Apps**:
   - What's Up? Free iOS, Android app based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Diary to keep thoughts and feelings, grounding games created to help keep you in the present when stress is taking over, and the ability to connect with others who may be feeling just like you.
   - SAM: Self-help for Anxiety Management—Free iOS, Android app. Tell the app how you're feeling, the app's self-help features walk you through some calming or relaxation practices.

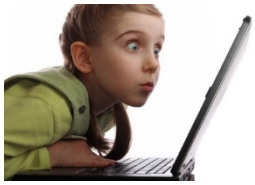
Entertainment Resources

1. **Coloring Books/Pages**
   - Download Free Coloring Books from 113 Museums
   - Download Free Coloring Pages from Mary Engelbreit
   - Color with the Wisconsin Union



2. **Free Music and Theater Performances:**
   - Berliner Philharmoniker
   - Metropolitan Opera's Nightly Met Opera Streams
   - All Arts

3. **Virtual Tours**



   - Virtual Museum Tours
   - 30 Virtual Field Trips
   - Art Museum Virtual Tours
   - National Parks Virtual Tours

4. **Writing Program**—In Madison, an intergenerational writing program is underway. Older adults have been paired with local high school students. They are discussing short articles on Ageism. Because discussions are in written form, social distancing requirements are met. For more information, contact Madison Senior Center.

5. **Poetry**—Have people call in with written poems and add them to your newsletters. Or have them submit poems to local TV or newspaper.

6. **Dane County Parks: Conservation Corner Video Series**—Each Friday at 1 pm, videos are posted on Facebook helping you engage with parks right from home! Weekly topics include: Habitat Restoration, Birding, Prescribed Burns, Volunteerism, and What's Blooming? History of Dane County Parks, Tree Care, and more.

7. OTR Streamer Old Time Radio—Free app with an archive of popular radio shows from 1930s through 1950s.

8. Librivox—Free, ad-free nonprofit public domain with many languages available. Choose to listen to an audiobook read by a volunteer or volunteer to read a book for others.

9. The Sofa Singers—A free and weekly online singing event from James Sills that brings hundreds of people together from around the world to spark joy and human connection.

10. Mather Telephone Topics—Simply call a toll-free number to listen to a wide range of interesting discussions and programs including wellness, education, music reviews, live performances, and more! Browse and register here.

11. The UnLonely Project—There are over 35 films that are inspiring, moving, and engaging.
12. Bird Watching—Obtain/distribute bird seed with information on bird watching.

Positivity

1. Place positive affirmations in meal bags—Click on Activities-Conversation Starters > Words of Encouragement Full Page Quotes
2. **Have meal participants write positive notes to each other**—You can utilize your nutrition program for this. Have the meal delivery volunteers collect notes from participants and distribute them the next day.
3. Mindfulness Resource
4. "Be the reason someone smiles today" postcards



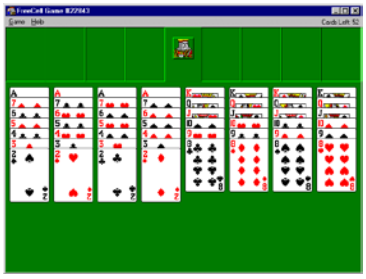
5. **Gratitude Wall**—Share something you are grateful for, have a "gratitude wall" where people can submit items to be posted.
6. Joy4All Hotline— "Students launch a hotline with jokes, stories and support for isolated seniors," Christopher Dawson, *CNN* (4/18/20)
7. Staying Mentally Healthy During Coronavirus—Free resources for emotional and physical health

Social Connections

1. Well Connected—free site that offers several opportunities for engagement using just a phone.
2. Social Call—free site matches volunteers with seniors on a one-to-one basis, bringing compassionate conversation and care into their lives and giving volunteers an opportunity to listen and learn.
3. **Story Time**—Connect with local radio stations and librarians to read a book (30 min segment).
4. **Newspapers**—Connect with local newspapers and see if they would donate newspapers to meal participants.
5. **Book club**—Create a book club with seniors via zoom, conference call, etc. You can also utilize volunteers for this and create a "one-on-one" book club between the volunteer and older adult. Have the volunteer call and read a chapter of a book and then discuss. Try one of these free online book clubs: Action Book Club, Andrew Luck Book Club, Oprah's Book Club, Reese's Book Club



6. Play Cards Together



7. Pen Pal Programs
   - Pen Pal Program—Madison Senior Center created a pen pal program matching volunteers to older adults in the Madison area to correspond and make new friends. Currently 30+ people are participating and there's room for more! Can be done using old-fashioned pen and paper, email, texting, social media, or however you and your pen pal decide.
   - To Battle Isolation, Elders and Children Connect as Pen Pals—"Pen pal programs have sprouted up around the world as schools and senior centers try to keep older adults connected and children occupied," Mihir Zaveri, *New York Times* (4/10/20)



8. **Car Parade**—Coordinate a local drive-by car parade. Have staff wear silly costumes, play music, smile and wave while participants drive by.
9. Spreadjoy24/7 Movement—through writing letters



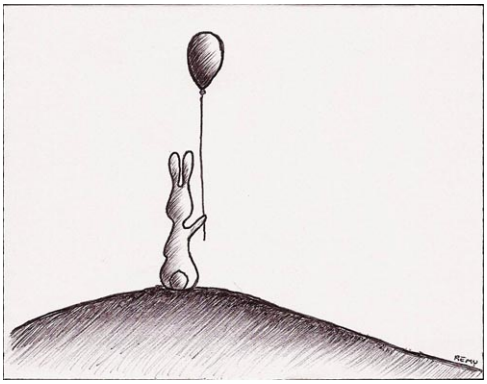
10. Goosechase—A virtual scavenger hunt you can play with friends and family, while maintaining safe social distancing. Recreational tier is free for up to three teams, unlimited missions.
11. Generations On Line—This resource guides older adults on using FaceTime, Zoom, Skype, texting, taking photos, and email with large type, simple on-screen instructions.
12. Stitch—International online community for 50+ year olds. Focused on companionship and community. Basic free membership; $5 per month access to online community and all events.
13. AARP Foundation: connecy2affect—You can complete a self-assessment to help understand how connected you are. AARP Foundation will they provide you with helpful resources.
14. Meals Together—They pair you with a Food Friend from a different generation to share a meal over a video call and cook up hearty conversations!
15. ASK: Answers for Seniors & Kids—This project was created to connect people together with positivity during a time of crisis. Anonymously submit questions and/or answers for another generation to respond to.
16. Mon Ami—Another way to build connections across generations in a time of need.
17. Lives in Print—A virtual memoir-writing program that will encourage older adults to explore and share anecdotes from their life through a pen pal relationship with a high school or college student. This program is intended to address growing isolation and memory issues amongst seniors, exacerbated by social distancing.



18. Far From Alone—A public health awareness campaign to address health-related social needs and to promote understanding of loneliness and soc isolation issues that are exacerbated by the Coronavirus pandemic. They have many resources including Institute on Aging's Friendship Line. This is a toll-free line for a friendly conversation and caring ear of a trained volunteer.
19. Letters Against Isolation—Send self-isolating seniors letters to brighten their days!

20. WRAP Wellness Guide—This free resource guide provides practical guidance for overcoming feelings of isolation and loneliness through building connections with oneself and others. It is designed for self-exploration about being connected, staying connected, getting reconnected, and choosing connection – even during difficult times. You can use it on your own, with a friend, or with groups.

Additional Resources



211 and United Way Dane County—Social engagement tools, as well as social services and other resources, will be accessible via the national 211 database. For local resources and programs, use United Way Dane County.

Coalition to End Social Isolation & Loneliness – A compilation of resources on the physical, behavioral, and mental health effects of physical distancing and how to stay connected with others while intentionally isolation oneself.

"Older Adults Remain Isolated Despite Reopening These Programs Help"—Mariel Padilla, *The New York Times* (6/8/20)

"Staying busy and engaged while at home"—Council on Aging (3/19/20)

"Coping with Isolation"—SpringWell (4/28/20)

"Reimagine Your Life"—Richard J Leider and Alan M. Webber, *AARP The Magazine*, Oct/Nov 2013

Loneliness as a Risk Factor: Making Connections to Improve Health Video

Administration for Community Living - COVID19

- ACL Printable Tip Sheet: https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/oam/2020/EngageVirtually.pdf

DHS COVID-19

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

National Alliance on Mental Illness

"Comforting Wisconsin Seniors During Coronavirus Pandemic" Marti Glaser, *Spectrum News* (4/29/20)

"Older and Stuck at Home? Expert Advice on Fitness" Gretchen Reynolds, *New York Times* (4/24/20)

"Exercising with Chronic Conditions" *National Institute on Aging* (4/3/20)

"What submarine crews and astronauts can teach us about isolation" Anna Russell, *New Yorker* (4/9/20)

"Protecting older adults during social distancing," Ali Jawaid, *Science Magazine* (4/10/20)

The Health and Medical Dimensions of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults, publication by *National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine* (2020)

"COVID-19 and the consequences of isolating the elderly," Richard Armitage & Laura B. Nellums, *Lancet Public Health* (March 2020)



"Caring from a distance," Gazette staff, *GazetteXtra* (3/25/20)

"Loneliness among seniors" Jeffery Borenstein, *Psychology Today* (4/13/20)

Mental Health in Older Adults During COVID-19 Webinar: "You Can Make a Difference: Having difficult conversations during times of crisis with older adults"