

# Caring for Wellbeing of Older Adults During COVID-19:

## *Connecting While Social Distancing*

**Millions of older adults already struggle with loneliness, isolation, and lack of regular companionship.** Now, imagine them being flooded with messages that “elders with underlying medical conditions are most at risk of death from in-person transmission of COVID-19,” and in Italy hospitals are “prioritizing the lives of young persons and those more likely to recover.” These messages coupled with social distancing is further isolating older adults.

### *What can I do? How can I help?*

Loneliness and isolation are dangerous—but we can **connect** while **social distancing!**

- Check in on the people in your life who live alone—call them! Regularly!
- Utilize social media to stay connected.
- Connect with your clergy and faith community to reach out together.
- Volunteer through the aging network!

### **LET THEM HEAR YOUR VOICE.**

A simple phone call (or video call) may be a powerful way to combat social isolation.

#### *Creative ways to spend time on the phone (or Skype/Zoom/Google Hangout)*

- Plan consistent times to “meet”—make calls part of your regular routine.
- Read poetry or a book together.
- Play trivia or games (i.e. 20 Questions), or tell jokes!
- Ask the person to tell you about a favorite memory of their childhood.
- Pray with them or Read scripture.
- Read the Daily Office together from the Book of Common Prayer, available here: [https://episcopalchurch.org/files/book\\_of\\_common\\_prayer.pdf](https://episcopalchurch.org/files/book_of_common_prayer.pdf)

#### *If you aren't a big talker ...*

- Plan to watch a favorite TV show during the call
- Plan to watch (and “play”) a TV game show such as Jeopardy!
- Listen and play music.
- Watch a movie together.
- Do a crossword puzzle together.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**Resources for family caregivers:** <https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/>

**How to make a household care plan:** <https://bit.ly/393BkOB>

**Administration for Community Living:** <https://acl.gov/COVID-19>

**ACL Eldercare Toll-Free Number:**  
1-800-677-1116

**Eldercare Locator:**  
<https://eldercare.acl.gov/Public/Index.aspx>

### *What if the person is unable to talk?*

- If someone in your life is at risk of social isolation and cannot communicate verbally, check with their care provider. Ask them to plan regular contact hours, or for assistance setting up video technology like FaceTime. Work together to plan out how to connect.
- Ask specific questions for person's the well-being: Are they eating meals? How is their mood? What activities are offered daily?

## **VOLUNTEER**

Consider volunteering as part of the efforts underway with a local senior center. Faith based communities are one of the main sources of home delivered meal (HDM) volunteers. Services have been altered for safety regarding COVID-19; meals are being delivered through social distancing. The meal is dropped at the front door, the older adult is called, the volunteer steps back a safe distance (minimum of 6 feet).

- Your church may already have a relationship with a local senior center. If not, you can develop one. It is pretty easy, requires a quick background check, and is most meaningful.
- Many deliver meals on a route, some do it during their lunch break.
- HDM volunteers have a unique opportunity to connect with the older adult from a distance.
- **Go to <https://eldercare.acl.gov/Public/Index.aspx> to find your local Area Agency on Aging or county senior services office.** Ask them for **volunteer opportunities** with homebound members of your community. (*Try to have one representative do this for an organized group.*)

Finally, please know you have all you need in this moment to promote life with a socially isolated senior. All that is needed is a caring heart, and desire to connect.

### *Prayer for the Aged, from the Book of Common Prayer*

*“Look with mercy, O God our Father, on all those whose increasing years bring them weakness, distress, or isolation. Provide for them homes of dignity and peace; give them understanding helpers, and the willingness to accept help; and, as their strength diminishes, increase their faith and their assurance of your love. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”*

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