

Elder Loneliness & Isolation

Fact, Fiction or Epidemic?

**HOW ARE WE
STAYING STRONG
IN OUR EFFORTS
TO OFFER ELDERS CONNECTION
IN A CLIMATE OF COVID-19 LONELINESS?**

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

WHAT RESOURCES CAN YOU SHARE?

WHAT INSPIRATION CAN YOU OFFER?

HOW ARE YOU TAKING CARE OF YOU?

Presentation Objectives

- To explore and define loneliness and isolation and their impact on older adult health and well-being
- To examine how we can identify loneliness among clients
- To incorporate studies and statistics that illustrate the significant role loneliness and isolation play in the quality of elder life
- To reflect on friendship as an antidote to loneliness and share other ideas and solutions

Presentation Overview

- Three State of Being: Solitude. Loneliness. Isolation.
- Isolation: Creates a Circle of Loss & Isolation Risk Factors
- The Societal Impact of Elder Loneliness and Isolation – Fact of Fiction?
- The COVID Factor
- Measurement. Causes. Solutions.
- Identifying Loneliness: An Isolation Assessment Tool for Your Clients
- One Response/Resource: Friendship – An Antidote to Loneliness and Isolation
- Your thoughts on responses and resources
- Presentation sources and contact information

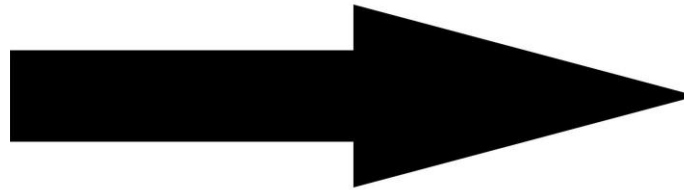
Three States of Being:

Which would you choose for yourself?

Which do you see among your clients?



SOLITUDE



LONELINESS

ISOLATION

Solitude ...

- ✓ Being alone without feeling lonely
- ✓ Nourishes peace, tranquility and renewal
- ✓ Restores us mind, body and spirit



Loneliness ...

- ❖ the personal feeling of isolation
- ❖ the personal feeling of not belonging
- ❖ the personal sense of distance and separation from others
- ❖ Feeling lonely depletes us mind, body and spirit



Loneliness  **Disconnection**



ISOLATION



Leads to a Circle of Loss

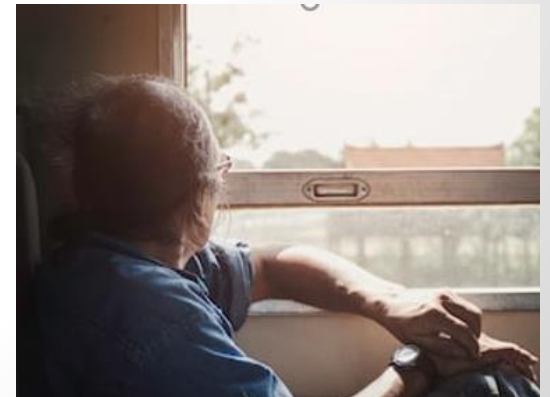


Withdrawal from
relationships/
meaningful
community
engagement

Impact on
Personal
capacities

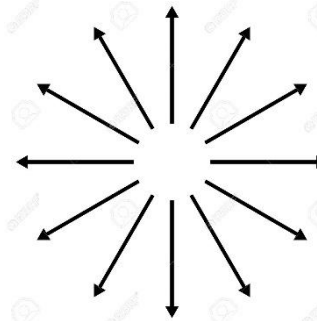


Relationship to
physical environment



Hopes,
dreams;
yearnings
& goals

One's
Sense of
Self-
agency



Risk Factors for Isolation

- Living Alone
- Having Psychological or Cognitive Vulnerabilities (depression, low self esteem, compromised self-efficacy, addiction)
- Being a Caregiver to a loved one with a severe chronic illness or disability
- Experiencing a Major Life Transition (loss of a partner/spouse, friends, family, employment, resources)
- Living in a Rural Location
- Having a Small Social Network and/or Inadequate Social Support
- Having a language other than English as One's Primary Language
- Belonging to a Minority Group (an ethnic, racial or minority group, the LGBTQ community or other cultural minority group)

The Impact of Elder Isolation (Pre-COVID-19): Fact or Fiction?

Loneliness and isolation can be as detrimental to your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

True OR False

Socially isolated elders are more likely to die from half of all disease-related causes of death.

True OR False

The Impact of Elder Isolation: Fact or Fiction?

Socially isolated elders are more prone to falls and malnourishment. They are more frequently re-admitted to hospital and more often permanently institutionalized.

True OR False

According to the AARP Public Policy Institute, Medicare currently spends \$2.7 **B**illion more a year to treat isolated elder citizens - than would be necessary had such elders a robust social support network (such networks are considered vital to healthy ageing)

True OR False

The Impact of Elder Isolation: Fact or Fiction?

Lonely people have a 32% increased risk of developing dementia

True OR False

In the Twin Cities metro area there are 25,000 people living alone over the age of 65

True OR False

The Impact of Elder Isolation: Fact or Fiction?

Social isolation is a
national health
epidemic

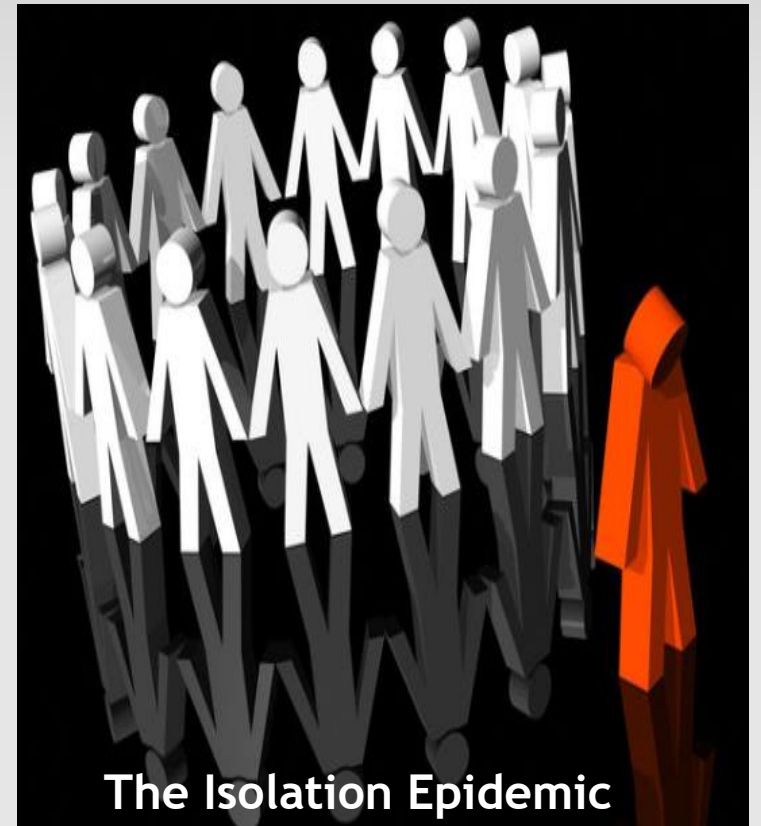
True OR False

PRIOR to Spring 2020 which of These Two Epidemics
Could Every Single One of Us Do Something About
Every Single Day?



The Opioid Epidemic

OR



The Isolation Epidemic

BUT...

Then Along Came ...

COVID-19

And What Happened Next?

The Pandemic Effect Amplifies Isolation

According to AARP, since the pandemic began negative emotions have spiked among adults over 50. Yet, not many are turning to anyone for help - despite reporting significant increase in feelings of:

- Anxiety
- Stress
- Frustration
- Depression
- Lack motivation
- Hardship related to challenges accessing resources such as food, healthcare and transportation

Compared to the above:

Less than 20% report feeling calm, happy or excited since the pandemic struck

Added to the above, COVID-19 has thrown many into unexpected retirement. A huge life adjustment under normal circumstances - pandemic-propelled retirement amplifies the risk of social disconnection as people scramble to adjust to sudden change

Social Isolation ...

Is measurable in terms of factors such as:

- the size of one's social network
- personal mobility
- availability of transportation
- access to community



Causes of isolation are cumulative

Transportation Challenges

Lack of accessible and affordable transportation options
Driving retirement

Poor Health and Well-being

Untreated hearing loss
Mobility impairments
Frailty
Poor mental health

Solutions depend on relationship-building Initiatives (**which COVID limits**)

Volunteer-based ride programs
Livable/age-friendly community initiatives

Falls prevention programs

Causes of
isolation are
cumulative

Life
Transitions,
Role Loss or
Change

Leaving the
workforce
Loss of a partner
or friends
Becoming
a caregiver

Societal
Barriers

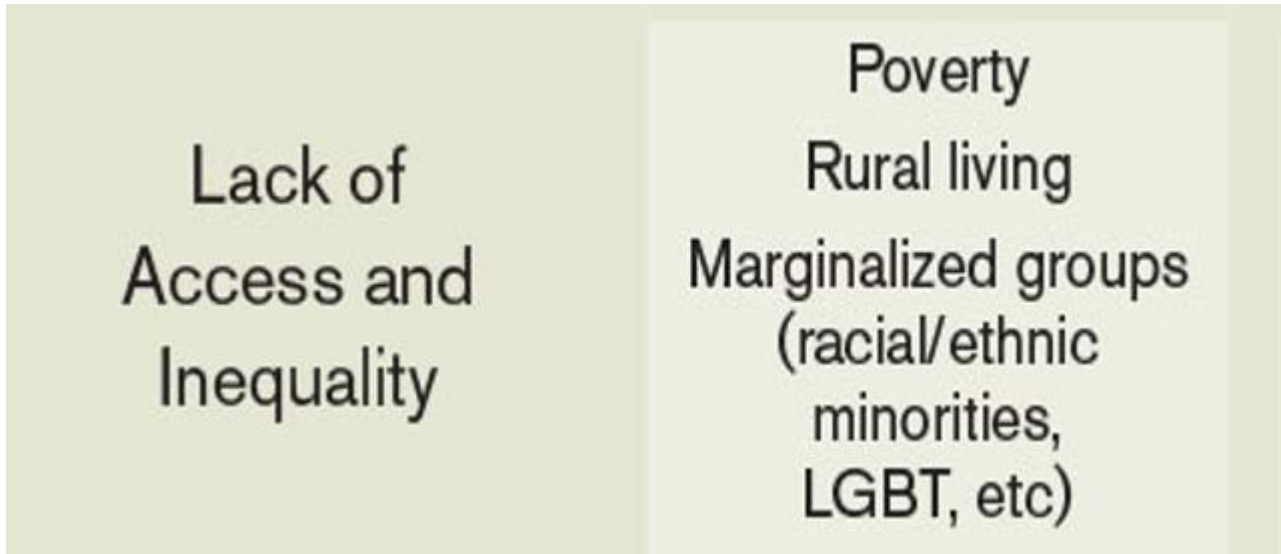
Ageism
Lack of
opportunities for
older adults to
engage and
contribute

Solutions depend on
relationship-building
initiatives

Support groups
Lifelong learning
Senior centers
Creative/artful aging

Intergenerational
programs
Lifelong learning
Policies to support
an older workforce

Causes of
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cumulative



Solutions depend on
relationship-building
initiatives



AARP Isolation Assessment

How Connected Is the Older Adult You Know?

-
- | | | |
|--|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The older adult I know lives alone. | <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |
|--|---------------------------|--------------------------|
-
- | | | |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2. The older adult I know sees or talks to family members and friends at least once a week. | <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|
-
- | | | |
|--|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3. The older adult I know provides daily care or support to a family member or friend who needs help with everyday tasks (such as preparing meals, providing transportation and grocery shopping). | <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |
|--|---------------------------|--------------------------|
-

AARP Isolation Assessment

How Connected Is the Older Adult You Know?

-
- | | | |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 4. The older adult I know almost always has a ride or the transportation they need to get where they want to go. | <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |
| <hr/> | | |
| 5. The older adult I know finds it difficult or impossible to leave their home without assistance. | <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |
| <hr/> | | |
| 6. The older adult I know avoids socializing because it's hard to understand conversations, especially when there's background noise. | <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |
-

Isolation Assessment

How Connected Is the Older Adult You Know?

7. The older adult I know feels they make a meaningful contribution to their community.

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. The older adult I know participates on a weekly basis in social activities or attends organized groups, such as choirs, cultural performances, exercise classes, group meals, support groups, etc.

☐ Yes

☐ No

9. The older adult I know often feels that they lack companionship.

☐ Yes

☐ No

AARP Isolation Assessment

How Connected Is the Older Adult You Know?

10. The older adult I know often feels left out.

☐ Yes

☐ No

11. The older adult I know knows someone they could rely on if they had a problem and needed help or advice.

☐ Yes

☐ No

12. The older adult I know has suffered a major loss or change, like the death of a loved one or retirement.

☐ Yes

☐ No

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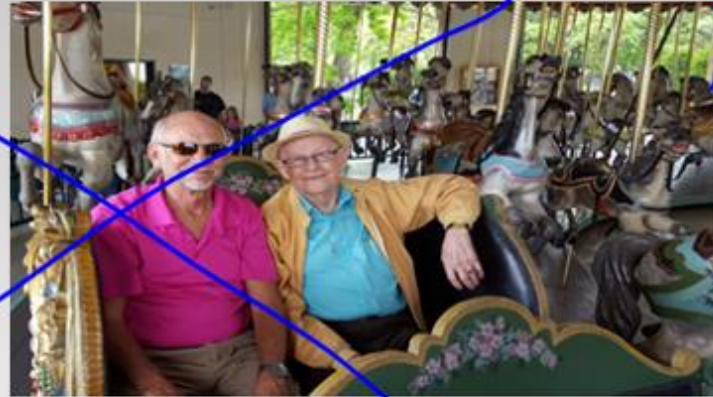
A Pre-COVID-19 Snapshot of Friendship LBFE Style ...



OUR COVID-19 REALITY

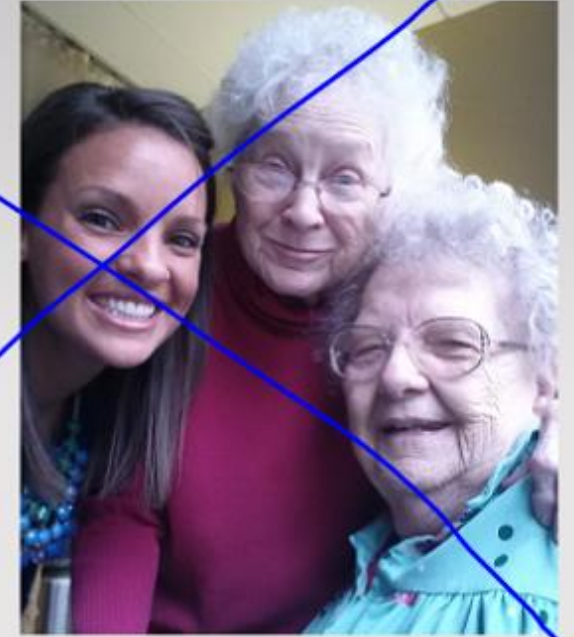
~~✓ Visiting Companions~~

one-on-one
meaningful
friendships



~~✓ Friendship & Flowers~~

Delivering
smiles,
warmth and
treats to
elders in
nursing
homes



~~✓ Home for the Holidays~~

Bringing Holiday cheer to
elders with fun-filled visits



✓ Phone Visits

Brightening an
elder's life
with check-in chats

LBFE's Response to COVID-19



Phone Companions

presents ...

Lasting Friendships at Your
Fingertips ...



Three easy ways an elder can join or be referred to Elder Friends Phone Companions

- **phone:** 612-746-0737

- **e-mail:** phonecompanions@littlebrothersmn.org

- **online referral form:**

<https://www.littlebrothersmn.org/phone-companions-call-receiver-application-form/>

OVER TO YOU ...

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WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

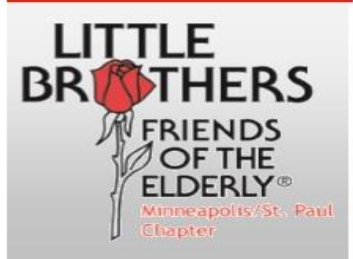
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HOW ARE YOU TAKING CARE OF YOU?

Call to Action ... (aka Heart-work)







🎵 For Being a Friend 🎵

Sources and Resources

AARP Isolation Assessment

How Connected Is the Older Adult You Know?

<https://connect2affect.org/assessment/how-connected-are-you/#result=2>

AARP Connect to Affect

<https://connect2affect.org/>

Framework for Isolation in Adults over 50

https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/aarp_foundation/2012_PDFs/AARP-Foundation-Isolation-Framework-Report.pdf

Senior Linkage Line

<https://www.seniorlinkageline.com/>

Optimal Aging Portal (Canada)

<https://www.mcmasteroptimalaging.org/blog/detail/professionals-blog/2016/04/08/loneliness-and-social-isolation-are-important-health-risks-in-the-elderly>

Cigna: U.S. Loneliness Index

https://www.multivu.com/players/English/8294451-cigna-us-loneliness-survey/docs/IndexReport_1524069371598-173525450.pdf

How do you identify or recognize the most lonely (UK)

<https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/frequently-asked-questions/identify-most-isolated/>

Listening to elders' stories: Transforming nursing students' perceptions about gerontology nursing

<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/47198072.pdf>

Organization and Speaker Contact Information and Resources

Little Brothers – Friends of the Elderly

Website: <https://www.littlebrothersmn.org/>

Phone: 612-721-1400

Address: 1845 East Lake St. Minneapolis, MN 55407

Service area: Minneapolis, St. Paul and Greater Minnesota

Elder Member Application/Referral Form

<https://www.littlebrothersmn.org/become-a-member/>

Volunteer application form:

<https://www.littlebrothersmn.org/volunteer-application/>

Dignity of Friendship Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YmrnBJYEG>

Speaker

Georgia Afton

Community Outreach Director

Little Brothers – Friends of the Elderly

gafton@littlebrothersmn.org

612-746-0732 (desk)

612-825-2349 (cell)

