



Dealing with Social Isolation

Who hasn't experienced social isolation at some point as we deal with COVID-19?

The fact is that older adults have dealt with these realities long before the virus, but the current climate has exacerbated both feelings of isolation and loneliness. Many activities continue to be suspended and older adults are frequently reminded that they are most at risk from exposure to the virus. Constant messages like this coupled with social distancing is further isolating older adults.

The best medicine for reducing the negative consequences of social isolation is to **stay engaged, stay active and stay connected** (with and without technology). This is especially important for people living alone. And, The Pew Research Center recently reported that 27% of adults 60 and older in the US do, in fact, live alone.



Here are some tips and resources that can help you or older adults you know.

A Brigham Young University study in 2015 revealed that social isolation can be as bad for health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Stay Engaged

- **Make a checklist** of daily activities to motivate you and help create a daily sense of accomplishment. Be sure to add “talk to someone” on the list, as well as exercise or stretching time.
- **Care for living things**, like pets or plants, provides a sense of purpose that's good for your health.
- **Find ways to laugh:** Watch a TV show, or chat with a friend or family member who brings joy.
- **Keep your mind active** with puzzles, reading or art projects. All help to keep the mind occupied and boost cognitive functioning.

Stay Active

- **Exercise daily!** Be it a walk outside or laps inside your home, just keep moving.
- **Take part in a virtual class** from the YMCA. Their online classes are often short and involve equipment you have at home. Their fall prevention exercise class may be a good place to start.

www.ymca360.org



EncourAGING and Equipping Congregations for Older Adult Ministry

Check out our website: aloaserves.org

Find us on Facebook: facebook.com/AdultLutheransALOA

Contact us by email: aloa4u@gmail.com

Stay Active

- **Every tried Yoga?** Look for yoga and chair yoga videos online, as well as virtual classes. Find free resources by going to [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and typing “yoga for older adults” in the search box.
- **Check your local Area Agency on Aging** for online exercise classes, too. You can find your local agency by entering your zip code at www.eldercare.acl.gov



Stay Connected

- **The easiest things are not high tech!** Make a list of 5 people who live alone. Talk to one each day of the week. A simple phone call will do. Most important is to call regularly.
- **Plan consistent times to “meet” by phone.** That way the calls become part of your routine.
- **Read scripture** or join together in devotions. You can download the current issue of Hope-Full Living devotional for older adults at www.hopefulldevotions.com
- **Watch (and “play”)** a TV game show like *Jeopardy!* together. Turn crossword or sudoku puzzles into a team activity by doing them together.

Explore online resources

It’s wise to look for legitimate and secure websites. Those that end in “edu” or “gov” are the most credible. Avoid clicking on ads or buttons as many are scams.

- **Read online** - Many local libraries have free e-books and audiobooks you can borrow without leaving home. Call your local library to find out how you can access their e-catalog.
- **Go on a virtual adventure.** You can go on digital tours of many places. A great place to start is in one of our many national parks, courtesy of the National Park Foundation. You’ll find them at www.nationalparks.org/connect/blog/take-virtual-visit-national-park
- **Zoos & aquariums** offer virtual behind the scenes tours. The Bronx Zoo (recently featured on Animal Planet) offers a number of virtual features at www.bronxzoo.com/virtual-zoo
- **Take in a free concert, theater or opera performance** online. Live from Carnegie Hall offers live stream concerts as well as a number of recorded past performances at www.carnegiehall.org/Explore/Watch-and-Listen
- **Appreciate art?** Take a virtual tour of museum or gallery collections worldwide at www.artsandculture.google.com/ Or, visit the Louvre at www.louvre.fr/en/visites-en-ligne

Right now, we need human connection more than ever. Phone calls help, but a regular face-to-face connection, even virtually, can go a long way toward easing the social isolation felt by so many older adults among us.