

# How Older Adults Can Stay Socially Connected



## As we get older, it can be harder to stay socially connected.

We may feel lonely because we may be living far from family, experience changes in our lifestyle, like retirement or illness, or face language barriers. But the good news is, staying connected with others can help to boost our mood and improve overall health.



## How to Spot Loneliness and Social Isolation: A Simple Checklist

It's hard to tell when we're feeling disconnected, but here are some signs that could help you recognize it:

☐ **Feeling down or worried a lot?**

If sadness or anxiety seems to stick around, it might be a sign.

☐ **No energy or motivation?**

You might find it harder to get things done or even get excited about anything.

☐ **Sleep trouble or changes in eating habits?**

If your sleep or appetite has changed, it could be connected to loneliness.

☐ **Lost interest in hobbies or socializing?**

When you don't feel like doing the things you used to enjoy, it might be a sign.

☐ **Feeling like a burden?**

Thinking that you're bothering others can point to a deeper feeling of isolation.

☐ **Having trouble focusing or remembering things?**

If concentrating or recalling things feels more difficult, it could be a warning sign.

## Why Loneliness and Social Isolation Matter: Health Risks to Watch Out For

Loneliness isn't just about how you feel emotionally — it can affect your health too. Here's why:

### Mental Health Risks:



- **Higher chance of feeling depressed or anxious.** Loneliness can make these emotions harder to shake off.
- **More stress and hopelessness.** When you're isolated, it can feel like things will never get better.
- **Memory and thinking issues.** Loneliness can speed up memory problems and even increase the risk of dementia.

### Physical Health Risks:



- **Heart health at risk.** Being lonely can raise the risk of heart disease and high blood pressure.
- **Weakened immune system.** When you're isolated, your body's ability to fight off illness can decline.

# 7 Easy Ways to Stay Connected

## Join a Community Group



Find group activities at senior centers, temples, and churches. It's a great way to make new friends who share your interests and culture.

## Get Active Outdoors



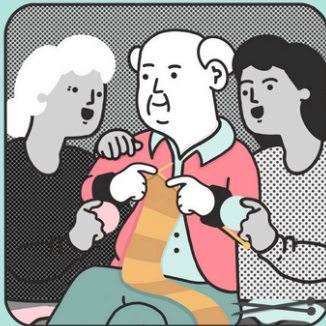
Get outside—walk, try tai chi, or dance! It lifts your mood, keeps you healthy, and helps you meet people.

## Keep in Touch with Loved Ones



Pick up the phone, video chat, or visit loved ones. Even small chats can make a big difference in feeling connected.

## Try a New Hobby



Try something new, like gardening, cooking, or calligraphy, to stay busy and connect with people who enjoy the same things.

## Volunteer to Help Others



Volunteering helps you feel useful and needed. And you get to meet new people—whether it's at a community center or tutoring kids.

## Join a Support Group



Many places offer groups for older adults to share stories and support each other.

## Use Technology



Smartphones and tablets keep you connected, and many community centers offer classes to help you get you started.

## You Are Not Alone



If loneliness feels like too much to handle, reach out to a friend, family member, or someone in your community. There are plenty of local organizations that offer free or affordable support. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. You don't have to go through it alone.

