LIVING ON A LIMITED BUDGET

QUESTION: *How might loss of income impact a modern 70 year old's ability to connect to others and maintain relationships? How might it effect identity?*

CHALLENGE: Live on a limited food budget for one week. (Based on the amount a person might receive from government benefits) For one day, limit internet use to public computers, only use phone features of smart phone.

HIGHLIGHT: This past Saturday I did not use the internet at my house. During this course I have noticed many seniors using free public computers at the library and career center. They are checking email, paying bills, doing research, playing online games, preparing taxes, and any number of other activities. So for one day, I thought I would step into their shoes. I limited internet use to the public library, about a 20 minute walk from my home. For someone with mobility issues that would be tough given the ice and snow along the way.

Icy path poses challenge for pedestrians

HOW I FELT:
FRUSTRATED - The computers were slow, the platform unfamiliar. I forgot my headphones, so couldn't watch video. I had to type in passwords normally saved on my computer at home.
LIKE SOMEONE WAS READING OVER MY SHOULDER - I didn't feel comfortable in the computer room.
ANXIOUS - about running out of my alloted time, about missing important information (I didn't have access to my phone calendar), about spending so much time at the library. It's time consuming to have to go somewhere else to use the internet!

DISCONNECTED - Once I left the library, I felt fairly cut off. At home, even if I don't leave the house, I can feel connected to the outside world by reading the news online or connecting with people through Facebook.
AT TIMES PATHETIC, AT OTHER TIMES PEACEFUL - When experiencing the above emotions, I didn't feel great, but after I finished at the library I felt a certain freedom that comes with being disconnected. Because I couldn't access digital information, I felt I could slow down and relax.

CONCLUSIONS: I think access to technology definitely helps stay connected to the world. There is a desire to use the internet by many seniors, but the experience at the library (based on my experiment) is frustrating. Home internet is too expensive for many. So there exists the problem- how to make internet access less frustrating and affordable to seniors?