



## Isolation and Loneliness During a Pandemic

*By Trey Jensen, Ph. D*

It is no secret that isolation and loneliness can significantly impact those with any chronic health issue. If you are reading this article, then it is already likely that you are interacting with the person(s) in your life who has dementia. Fortunately, most people with dementia who have participated in age studies report not feeling lonely. Furthermore, those who are caretakers of people with dementia (both professionally and family members) do not report loneliness. These statistics are, of course, before Covid-19 came along.

Right now it is unclear how many more caregivers would report loneliness and isolation due to the distancing requirements we have lived under for the better part of four months. I would guess, if surveyed today, a majority of caregivers felt isolated and lonely. Here are some ways for caregivers to minimize isolation and loneliness in the area of Covid-19.

- ◆ Get over the televideo hump! Talking to a loved one over Zoom (or Facetime) is absolutely not the same as talking to them face to face and sharing a long hug. But don't convince yourself that it isn't worth struggling through video calls. They are the closest thing we will get to being able to be face to face for a while and they are better than not having that contact.  
For example, I've heard of families having a zoom dinner where they literally eat dinner and have the "virtual person" (e.g. a propped up phone) in a spot where both parties can talk while having a meal.
- ◆ Make plans! It would be premature to set a specific date to have a fun event, but you can still plan for the event and specifics of what you would like to do.
- ◆ Expand your connections. What's the difference between calling your cousin in Minnesota and your cousin in New York? About a millisecond. Turn the current situation into an opportunity to reach out to those who are already physically distant from you.
- ◆ Take MORE time for self-care activities. These aren't the same as leisure. If you were used to some quiet reading time before Covid-19, intentionally take more. If you enjoy the outdoors, go out more than usual. One of the biggest mistakes that can cause burnout is trying to fit as much work and obligations into your schedule as you did before Covid.
- ◆ Finally, recognize that taking time for your own care is not being selfish. If you are not able to care for your family member with dementia as well as you would like, that is ok. Caregivers CAN NOT risk overdoing it now and allowing burnout to set in. It is better to take that extra time now so you can be there for your loved one later.

Please take care of yourselves, which includes wearing PPE when you are around others. No one is "too cool" to wear a mask in public and you need to be healthy for you to be able to attend to others.

## Tips to Reduce COVID-19 Anxiety!!!

In an effort to raise awareness, educate our community and assist families who have been touched by Alzheimer's Disease, this month's article will highlight MN Department of Health's tips to reduce COVID-19 anxiety. As things progress with COVID-19 prevention efforts, you and your family and friends may be experiencing increased stress and anxiety. Consider the following tips to support your mental well-being during these uncertain times. It is important to be gentle with yourself and others, and to take steps to support both your own and your family's mental well-being.

- ◆ Focus on what you can control ~ including your thoughts and behaviors.
- ◆ Remember that you are resilient, and so is humankind. We will get through this.
- ◆ Do what you can to reduce risk; take comfort that you are caring for yourself and others.
- ◆ Use technology to connect with others frequently.
- ◆ Look for the good stuff; the helpers, time with family, and opportunities to pull together. Write down three good things you are grateful for each day.
- ◆ Limit exposure to news or social updates. Be a critical thinker. Get your updates from reliable sources. Avoid speculation and rumors.
- ◆ Model peaceful behavior for those around you. Remember everyone experiences stress differently.
- ◆ Don't let fear influence your decisions, such as hoarding supplies.
- ◆ Be gentle with yourself and others. Be reflective rather than reactive.
- ◆ Create a regular routine.
- ◆ Maintain a healthy diet and exercise routines to help your immune system and mental well-being.
- ◆ Reflect on your reactions. Many who have experienced trauma may be triggered by feelings of powerlessness. Understanding what you are feeling can help you consider how you want to respond to the triggers.
- ◆ Practice meditation and yoga, or other mind-body techniques. Find apps or online videos to help.
- ◆ Reach out if you need to talk. There are local and national hotlines and warmlines that can help!

### RESOURCES:

Warmlines MN: 651.288.0400 or 1.877.404.3190 or Text "Support" to 85511 M-F 5p ~ 10p  
Mentalhealthmn.org

Peer Support Connection Warmlines: Call or text ~ 844.739.6369 5p~9a

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.8255 [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Resource: Supporting Mental Well-Being during COVID-19; MN Dept of Health

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## Choosing Healthy Meals as You Get Older

## 10 Healthy Eating Tips for people age 65+



*Making healthy food choices is a smart thing to do ~ no matter how old you are!* Your body changes through your 60s, 70s, 80s and beyond. Food provides nutrients you need as you age. Use these tips to choose foods for better health at each stage of life.

*Drink Plenty of Liquids ~* With age, you may lose some of your sense of thirst. Drink water often. Low-fat or fat-free milk or 100% juice also helps you stay hydrated. Limit beverages that have lots of added sugars or salt. Learn which liquids are better choices.

*Make eating a social event ~* Meals are more enjoyable when you eat with others. Invite a friend to join you or take part in a potluck at least twice a week. A senior center or place of worship may offer meals that are shared with others. There are many ways to make mealtimes pleasing.

*Plan healthy meals ~* Find trusted nutrition information from ChooseMyPlate.gov and the National Institute on Aging. Get advice on what to eat, how much to eat, and which foods to choose, all based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Find sensible, flexible ways to choose and prepare tasty meals so you can eat foods you need.

*Know how much to eat ~* Learn to recognize how much to eat so you can control portion size. MyPlate's Super Tracker shows amounts of food you need. When eating out, pack part of your meal to eat later. One restaurant dish might be enough for two meals or more.

*Vary your vegetables ~* Include a variety of different colored vegetables to brighten your plate. Most vegetables are a low-calorie source of nutrients. Vegetables are also a good source of fiber.

*Eat for your teeth and gums ~* Many people find that their teeth and gums change as they age. People with dental problems sometimes find it hard to chew fruits, vegetables, or meats. Don't miss out on needed nutrients! Eating softer foods can help. Try cooked or canned foods like unsweetened fruit, low-sodium soups, or canned tuna.

*Use herbs and spices ~* Foods may seem to lose their flavor as you age. If favorite dishes taste different, it may not be the cook! Maybe your sense of smell, sense of taste or both have changed. Medicines may also change how foods taste. Add flavor to your meals with herbs and spices.

*Keep food safe ~* Don't take a chance with your health. A food-related illness can be life threatening for an older person. Throw out food that might not be safe. Avoid certain foods that are always risky for an older person, such as unpasteurized dairy foods. Other foods can be harmful to you when they are raw or undercooked, such as eggs, sprouts, fish, shellfish, meat or poultry.

*Read the Nutritional Facts label ~* Make the right choices when buying food. Pay attention to important nutrients to know as well as calories, fats, sodium, and the rest of the Nutrition Facts label. Ask your doctor if there are ingredients and nutrients you might need to limit or to increase.

*Ask your doctor about vitamins or supplements ~* Food is the best way to get nutrients you need. Should you take vitamins or other pills or powders with herbs and minerals? These are called dietary supplements. Your doctor will know if you need them. More may not be better. Some can interfere with your medications or affect your medical conditions.

ACT on  
Alzheimer's  
Lakes Area

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We are terribly sorry but ~  
All programs hosted by ACT on Alzheimer's Lakes Area will be on  
hold or done virtually until Covid-19 is over.

Please watch our website [actonalzlakesarea.org](http://actonalzlakesarea.org) for any further  
updates.

Take care, be safe, stay healthy, and STAY HOME!

## Great Resource!!

The **Senior LinkAge Line**<sup>®</sup> is a service of the Minnesota Board on Aging in partnership with Minnesota's Area Agencies on Aging. It is a *free* service of the state of Minnesota that connects older Minnesotans and their families with the help they need.

They can help get you connected with just about any service  
you need!!

**Contact them today!**  
**1-800-333-2433**



The great secret that all old people  
share is that you really haven't  
changed in seventy or eighty years.  
Your body changes, but you don't  
change at all. And that, of course,  
causes great confusion.

— *Doris Lessing* —

AZ QUOTES



Lakes Area

**TOGETHER WE  
DO MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE!!**

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