



BRIGHTEN THE HOLIDAYS FOR YOUR SENIOR

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Fighting Loneliness

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How to Help Seniors Fight Loneliness During the Holidays

Loneliness is often experienced by seniors during the holiday season. There are ways to brighten the season for lonely and depressed seniors.

The holiday season can exacerbate seniors' feelings of loneliness. This can cause health problems and affect their quality of life.

Persistent loneliness can have the same health impact as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Since loneliness can exacerbate health issues and increase the risk of mortality, it is especially important to combat isolation and feelings of loneliness during the holidays. (Forbes)



Spot the Signs of Loneliness

Many seniors do not recognize their loneliness or the health problems that feeling lonely can cause. As a result, few will voice their need for additional support. Look for these signs of loneliness among seniors:

- Under or oversleeping
- Withdrawal from existing relationships
- Combativeness or moodiness
- Depression
- Lack of appetite
- Anxiety over change or visitors leaving
- Lack of interest in normal passions
- Decreased attention to self-care

(Seniors Guide Online)

Health Risks of Loneliness

Loneliness can increase seniors' risk of:

- High blood pressure
- Depression
- Low immune health
- Obesity
- Mortality

(Healthline)



How to Brighten the Holidays

During the holidays, many seniors feel particularly lonesome. Nostalgia, memories of lost loved ones, and distance from family can all contribute to the holiday blues. Add cheer to seasonal loneliness with strategies like these:

- Display holiday cards and greetings
- Set up decorations with seniors
- Help seniors make video calls to loved ones
- Plan holiday event outings
- Tune in to festive TV shows and regular radio programs
- Sign seniors up for in-house visits by carolers or other holiday volunteers
- Encourage seasonal volunteering if seniors are able



Tips for Fighting Loneliness

Besides holiday-specific methods for combating loneliness, there are many steps seniors can take to reduce social isolation. Seniors can:

- Get connected with local senior centers
- Attend religious or interest-based groups
- Participate in home-visit programs
- Schedule regular phone calls with loved ones
- Practice letter or card writing, even to pen pals
- Use technology to connect with distant loved ones
- Mark social events to look forward to on the calendar
- Call The Friendship Line at 1-800-971-0016 at any hour to engage in conversation. (NCOA)

Did You Know?

- 17% of Americans over 65 live alone
- An estimated 8.8% of seniors in America are chronically lonely
- Americans between the ages of 57 and 85 have support from an average of only 3.6 people
- 42% of Americans over 65 have a disability
- Health, location, impairment, economic status, and even language can impact the risk of isolation

(AARP)

Home Care Tip:

Loneliness is often linked to isolation. Isolation can be a threat to health, but also can increase safety risks. Social workers for seniors can arrange for a variety of services to help address seniors' needs, including isolation.