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Tips on Loneliness

At some point in our lives many of us may experience periods of loneliness from time to time and for some individuals this may lead to withdrawal from family, friends and the wider society. Loneliness and social isolation can also have serious consequences on an individual's physical, mental and social health. But the risks of social isolation depend not only on who you are, but also on where you live.

In the UK, the proportion of older persons living alone is increasing, with many elders spending too much time alone. The long-term effects of solitude can lead to experiencing an even greater risk of loneliness and total withdrawal from society.

Experiencing loneliness is something many of us do not like to admit. Since enforced social isolation, this has made for a more worrying encounter. For many people, loneliness is an experience of mixed emotions that can lead to uncertainty, anxiety and a deep sense of seclusion. For example, following a bereavement, depression and sudden withdrawal from their loved ones, social groups, and organisations.

In this current time of social distancing, it's all too easy to lose sight of the potential long-term consequences on seniors, made from imposed restrictions and the impact on the withdrawal of their family and social relationships.

Whilst many of us will celebrate the easing of social restrictions, it's important to remember that, regardless of age, some people may find their self-confidence and motivation to reintegrate back into the public domain challenging, through fear of the unknown and what our post-lockdown lives will be. After enforced isolation, many elders may struggle over many weeks to gain their confidence in venturing out again and will require sensitivity, support and encouragement from their friends and loved ones.

Living alone and isolated, many seniors may become vulnerable to a variety of unexpected problems and may also have underlying health issues. With this in mind, I have included some tips and advice that you will hopefully consider:

Ask your local parish councillor if they are holding an At Risk Register ensuring Data Protection (GDPR) for those who wish to receive support. If there is a local register, ask:

a) to have your name added as an individual, living alone and request close monitoring.

b) have a neighbour to keep a friendly eye out in case anything seems amiss.

c) provide details of your next of kin and/or close friend, should you become unwell and need GP or family support.

Having a sense of purpose is very important for the elderly, particularly when you feel as though you may be losing your independence by having to seek support from a neighbour, so think about contacting Age UK **www.ageuk.org** to get a personal alarm.

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People experiencing a deep sense of loneliness, anxiousness or feeling worried about coronavirus should contact their GP and/or **www.mind.org** for support.

It's vitally important to contact your **GP** if you feel unwell or require a medication review. **Call 111** If it's not a life-threatening situation but you require urgent medical help or advice.

1. Ensure your phone contacts are current and up-to-date, with neighbours/GP/Pharmacy/local shop details
2. Recharge your mobile phone regularly
3. Remain connected to family and friends through letter writing or via social media: phone calls, email, text, WhatsApp, Skype etc
4. Make sure you have your repeat prescriptions renewed/reviewed
5. Organisation links, specifically for loneliness that you may find useful:

www.countryliving.com/uk/wellbeing/a30526876/loneliness-support/

www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/

www.redcross.org.uk/get-help/get-help-with-loneliness

www.which.co.uk/later-life-care/home-care/loneliness/how-to-get-help-for-loneliness-avwgk8f93mym

www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/loneliness-in-the-elderly-how-to-help/

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