

Session 4: Tackling Loneliness and Promoting Social Connections among Nursing Home Residents

What are Social Isolation and Loneliness? How are they experienced by those in the Nursing Home?

Best Practices:

A Comparison of Social Isolation and Loneliness

Social Isolation	Loneliness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of meaningful contact A lack of social contact with others Few opportunities for connecting with others Separation from others based upon age, gender, sexual orientation, geography, spirituality, ethnicity/language, health, and in elders, the loss of family, partners, and friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of meaningful contact An emotion or feeling The difference between <i>desired</i> and <i>actual</i> contact with others Separation and feeling alone Range from discomfort to excruciatingly painful Distressing

The Impact of Loneliness on Physical and Mental Health

Physical Health	Mental Health
Increases the risk of:	Increases the risk of:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing coronary heart disease and stroke High blood pressure and Inflammation in the body Functional decline (e.g., climbing a flight of stairs, walking) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Memory loss and dementia Tendency toward depression Predictive suicide in old age

Topics in the News

- [Finding a Purpose Can Lower Risk of Loneliness in Older Adults, Study Shows](#)
- [Large New Study Links Social Isolation to Dementia Risk](#)

Links to Supporting Documents

- [Emotional Loneliness is Associated With Mortality Among Mentally Intact Nursing Home Residents With and Without Cancer: A Five-Year Follow-Up Study](#)
- [Loneliness Predicts Increased Blood Pressure: 5-Year Cross-Lagged Analyses in Middle-Aged And Older Adults](#)
- [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine - Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults: Opportunities for the Health Care System](#)
- [Loneliness, Hopelessness And Suicide In Later Life: A Case-Control Psychological Autopsy Study In Rural China](#)
- [Predictors and Subjective Causes of Loneliness in an Aged Population](#)
- [Role of Resilience and Social Support in the Relationship Between Loneliness and Suicidal Ideation among Chinese Nursing Home Residents](#)



Discussion Questions:

- What types of behaviors or comments do you notice among elders suggesting that they lack meaningful, social relationships and/ or feel lonely in their daily lives?
- Pay attention to what effect social isolation and/or loneliness are having on our elders' daily lives. What have you noticed?
- Identify impact points when an elder in our care might experience risk for increased social isolation or loneliness (i.e., admission, room change, discontinuation of therapy services, etc.)