



Avoiding Isolation: The Importance of People with Disabilities Staying Socially Engaged

Tips

1. Avoid staying at home alone for long periods of time without human contact.
2. Identify the people essential to your health, well-being, and quality of life.
3. Communicate with someone outside of your home at least twice a day: family, friends, & neighbors.
4. Ask a small group of peers to be part of a friend's circle that checks on each other daily.
5. Use varying forms of communication: in person, by email, social media, Zoom, voice call, or text.
6. Look for community events to attend: festivals, plays, local sports, etc.
7. Avoid new complications by paying attention to your health, including diet and exercise.
8. Look for opportunities to volunteer or mentor others navigating the same type of disability.
9. Get involved in a church or civic organization.
10. Limit exposure to negative input: news, social media, toxic relationships, etc.
11. Consult a mental health practitioner when you recognize you need more help.

Statistics

According to the National Institute on Health, loneliness and social isolation are associated with higher rates of depression, a weakened immune system, heart disease, dementia, and early death.

According to a 2018 national survey by Cigna, loneliness levels have reached an all-time high, with nearly half of 20,000 U.S. adults reporting they sometimes or always feel alone.

A report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) points out that more than one-third of adults aged 45 and older feel lonely, and nearly one-fourth of adults aged 65 and older are considered to be socially isolated.

Research published by the University of Central London found that those with a disability experienced greater increases in depression and anxiety than people without a disability, as well as poorer psychological wellbeing, quality of life and sleep, in addition to lower levels of social contact.

The researchers found that around 29% of respondents with a disability had significant depressive symptoms during the pandemic period compared with 16% of those without a disability.

"No one can live without relationship. You may withdraw into the mountains, become a monk, wander off into the desert by yourself, but you are related. You cannot escape from that absolute fact. You cannot exist in isolation."

■ Jiddu Krishnamurti

"Solitude, isolation, are painful things and beyond human endurance."

■ Jules Verne

"In constant physical or emotional isolation, nothing seems real, not even ourselves. It's only in the reflective eyes of others that assures us we exist at all."

■ Jason Versey

"We don't heal in isolation but in community."

■ S. Kelley Harrell

Resources

1. Consider doing a technology check up with your area AT center: www.katsnet.org/locations
2. Connect with a Kentucky Center for Independent Living for more ideas: Lexington – Independence Place - www.ipky.org
3. Louisville, Bowling Green, Murray – Center for Accessible Living – www.calky.org
Hazard – Disability Resource Center – www.drctn.org

This material was made possible by the new pilot program through a cooperative agreement with the Administration for Community Living (ACL grant #90PRRC0002-03-00). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the Human Development Institute staff and do not necessarily represent the official views of the ACL Or the Reeve Foundation.