



AGING TODAY

Who is Ready for the Roaring 20's?



By Bob Roth, Managing Partner of Cypress HomeCare Solutions

During the pandemic, we have collectively increased awareness of what the experts in their fields had on their radar all along. The epidemiologists were predicting this pandemic. Public health experts have been bracing for the underfunded infrastructure and healthcare experts have long known that social determinants of health, such as gainful employment and stable housing profoundly have an overwhelming effect on well-being.

In home care, we are all too familiar with the epidemic of loneliness experienced by seniors, and the pandemic shined a huge spotlight on it.

Older adults are more likely to live alone in the United States than most other places in the world. Forty-three percent of Americans over 60 identify as lonely and nearly 30% of Americans over 65 live by themselves.

Isolation and loneliness are often linked, but they are not the same. Isolation is an objective state of not having much contact with the world, which is what many experienced during the pandemic. Loneliness is subjective. It is the feeling that the contact you have is not enough.

Both isolation and loneliness are thought to prompt a heightened inflammatory response which can increase a person's risk for a myriad of medical conditions including dementia, depression, high blood pressure, and stroke.

Research published by AARP and Stanford University found that social isolation adds nearly \$7 billion a year to the cost of Medicare, in part because isolated people show up to the hospital sicker and stay longer.

My question is, can our shared experience of isolation and loneliness be the impetus to address these perils routinely experienced by seniors?

Work from home and blank social calendars forced us to be creative to reach out and connect with friends, family, and coworkers. Many report that in some cases these new routines produced more consistent contact within these social circles. It is vital to continue to reach out and nurture those relationships that have become the silver lining of the pandemic.

Encourage seniors and young people to collaborate to elevate technology skills. We know as our lifeline during the pandemic, these skills will continue to be important in the future.

As our world opens-up for vaccinated people, grab an older adult and take them to lunch. These social connections are more important than most people realize. As we age, having close ties to others and participating in meaningful activities are associated with keeping the mind sharp and memories strong.

After worrying about our health for the past 16 months, it is great to know that rekindling relationships, especially for seniors, is exactly what the doctor ordered.

So, who is ready for the roaring 20's?



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