



AGING TODAY Getting Back To Visiting In Person



By Bob Roth, Managing Partner of Cypress HomeCare Solutions

During the pandemic, we found ourselves isolated to the confines of our homes, and if we were lucky, we had a partner and maybe even a family to share these stay-at-home orders. It was nice not to have to be alone during what would end up being a very scary time in our lives.

Prior to the pandemic, there already existed this serious problem for older adults, they were experiencing social isolation and loneliness at an exceedingly high rate of growth.

This is not just a senior issue, this is an issue over the past 16 months that has affected children, teenagers, young adults, and mature adults this experience of social isolation hit all of us. We learned very quickly that social isolation and loneliness were an equal opportunity offender. Of course, the most vulnerable populations were at the greatest risk, children, and seniors, but all of us were affected in one way or another and we had to figure out how to exist in this new world.

So many things emerged on the side of worsening issues like social isolation and loneliness, but at the same time there were many innovations in science and adoption of new technologies, innovations and streamlining of processes occurred too.

If there is one thing that we can all be thankful for, is that this happened in a time when we have made advances in both technology and science. Imagine had this happened 30 years earlier in 1990. Let's start with the science, we could not have developed a vaccination as quickly as we were able to, 4 years was the quickest from start to finish in the past, and Messenger RNA vaccinations had not even been developed. Then let's look at the way we connect, we live in a day and age where nearly everyone can connect via personal computers, internet, Zoom calls, email, ordering groceries to be delivered at home, and Amazon Prime, these connections did not exist back in 1990.

For those that sheltered by themselves, or with a partner or family the effect of this experience offered the opportunity for individuals to be more introspective and reflective on one's values, trust and leadership in the future. It enabled many people to find new ways to discover or rediscover things that are truly important to them.

In our work lives we have had to use our technology to have virtual meetings with our clients/customers, colleagues, conferences and trade gatherings. It has been nothing short of amazing that we have been able to stay connected, doing so in a one-dimensional medium makes it really difficult to stay engaged and have meaningful visits.

Let's not minimize these experiences that have enabled to stay connected, nothing can compare to getting together in-person. Last week I attended a leadership conference for the home care trade called Home Care 100 and went on to spend three amazing days in inspiring and thought-provoking content, held quality conversations with my peers and saw old friends and made many new ones. The conference kicked off with some valuable insight on leadership from former Secretary General Colin Powell and how trust is integral to your role as a leader. While the former Secretary General could not be with us, we used technology to bring him in and then the entire conference was in person.

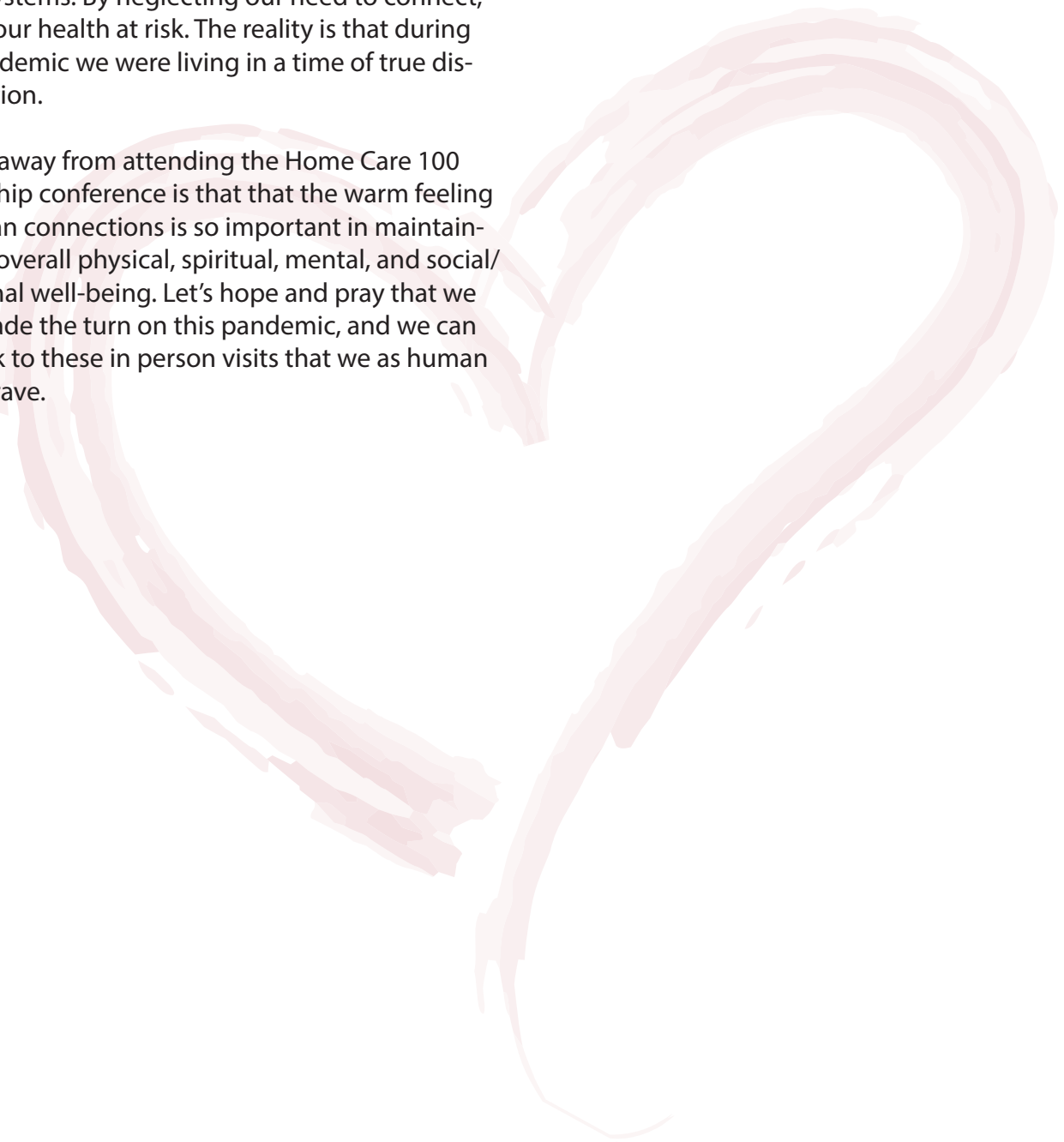
As a professional you are always trying to work on as Stephen Covey would in his 7 habits of highly effective people is his number 7 habit is "sharpen the saw." It's about taking the time to renew and refresh four dimensions of our natures; physical, spiritual, mental, and social/emotional – so that we're more effective in our life's work.

Last week I was able to work on this number 7 habit and I would not have been able to to receive the materials, information, connections etc. without having

had this in-person experience.

Social connection can lower anxiety and depression, help us regulate our emotions, lead to higher self-esteem and empathy, and actually improve our immune systems. By neglecting our need to connect, we put our health at risk. The reality is that during this pandemic we were living in a time of true disconnection.

My takeaway from attending the Home Care 100 Leadership conference is that the warm feeling of human connections is so important in maintaining our overall physical, spiritual, mental, and social/emotional well-being. Let's hope and pray that we have made the turn on this pandemic, and we can get back to these in person visits that we as human beings crave.



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