



Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E.

Albion | Battle Creek | Kalamazoo | Portage



10 Ways to Care for Older Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. continues to care for older adults during the current pandemic. Please let us know how we can serve you or a member of your family during this time. Below are helpful suggestions about how you can help seniors in your family or neighborhood during this time of social distancing.

Some of the most vulnerable people in our society during this time of social distancing are older adults. They may be your relatives, friends or neighbors, but they need social interaction, especially during this time we are dealing with the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Why is this important?

Social distancing can lead to social isolation.

Social isolation can lead to depression.

Depression can lead to a lack of self-care and reduced immunity levels.

A lack of self-care and reduced immunity levels can lead to mental and physical decline.

Mental and physical decline can lead to hospitalization.

Right now, the hospital is the last place we want our senior neighbors, family members and friends to go. If they end up in the hospital, they will likely be exposed to various illnesses and not be able to have any visitors during the pandemic.

To help prevent this from happening, our seniors may need some assistance. When you stop to think about it, you can probably make a list of a number of older people you know. Depending on the length of your list, you may not be able to give attention to all of them. But, you can take steps to make sure someone is checking on them if your list has too many names. Try to narrow your list to 1 – 3 older adults to whom you will dedicate some of your time during the current pandemic. Below are 10 ways you can help prevent social isolation and loneliness for them.

10 Ways to Care for Older Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic

1. **Stay in touch by phone** – You may not be able to physically see those on your list every day, but you can make a daily phone call or two to check on them. Older adults appreciate knowing someone is there even if they can't see the person. A friendly voice on the phone can brighten their day. It also gives you an opportunity to ask them if they are in need of anything.
2. **Stop by to see them** – In these times of social distancing, you may not want to go into their home (for their sake as well as yours). However, you can stand outside the door and have a brief conversation with them. If it is difficult for the person to walk or stand you may have to enter their home. Only enter the home if you and the person(s) you are visiting are not exhibiting any symptoms. If you do enter the home, make sure you sanitize your hands before entering and after leaving and don't touch your face. Wearing a mask in these situations would also be a good idea. They will enjoy seeing a friendly face (even if it is behind a mask) and engaging in conversation. Not only is this an opportunity to once again see if they need anything, but you can also observe if they are maintaining proper grooming habits and keeping their home clean. If they are not, it may be an indication of a state of anxiety or depression of which you should be aware.

3. **Shop for them** – If you are going to the grocery store, ask if you can pick something up for them while you are there. Even if they say “no,” you may want to pick up a few cans of soup, canned vegetables, or other non-perishable items just so they can have it on hand.
4. **Make sure they are aware of resources that may only be a phone call away** - By dialing 211 they can ask for help for a variety of things. The 211 representative will be able to direct them to the proper resources for services such as assistance with utility bills, finding counseling services to deal with anxiety, depression or loneliness, or many other forms of assistance.
5. **Listen carefully to what they say during your conversations** – When talking to an older adult you will begin picking up on certain needs they have in their life. They may not even realize it’s a need in their life. For example, if they are used to going to church every Sunday but they have not been able to go because of the current state mandates on social distancing, you may be able to call their church to have the pastor or someone from the congregation reach out to them. Or, they may be out of a medication they must take daily. You can be instrumental in helping them get their prescription refilled.
6. **Introduce them to ways to communicate through technology** – This won’t work for older adults who purposefully shy away from technology, but for those who have a computer or smart phone, make sure they know how to use it to communicate with their family and friends through FaceTime, Zoom, or other technology.
7. **Send them a card or letter** – Even if you live next door to the person, they will appreciate receiving a card of encouragement or a hand-written letter especially for them. Encouragement and knowing someone is thinking about them can be a great motivator. You may also want to enlist your friends to send a card.
8. **Give them a project** – Projects are a great diversion to get a senior away from the television and involved in something that can be more mentally stimulating. A project could be a puzzle, word find books, organizing old photos, crossword puzzles, adult coloring books, or any number of things. Or, you could both read the same book and talk about it during your conversations.
9. **Provide them transportation** – Even during this time of social distancing, many older adults still have essential doctor appointments. Offer to take them to and from the appointment. This will also give you another opportunity to engage them in conversation and interrupt any feelings of isolation or loneliness.
10. **Take them a hot meal** – Many older adults resort to a diet consisting of snacks or things that can be heated in a microwave. They would appreciate a home-made meal periodically. Also, you may find the older adult would be a good candidate for the Meals on Wheels program. You can be instrumental in getting that service established for them.

If you are caring for an aging adult who has more needs than you can handle, you can reach out to Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. to determine what services may be available to best help them. As seniors age, they begin to need more and more assistance to be able to continue to live in the home they have grown to love. Most seniors don't want to live in an assisted living facility or a nursing home, but they are also unable to safely live independently. The services of Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. have been designed exactly for those individuals. If you believe PACE (Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly) services can benefit a family member, friend or neighbor, please call Jackie at (269) 441- 9319, visit www.seniorcarepartnersmi.org or text PACE to 51555.