Mental Health & Social Isolation Amongst Your Residents During the Pandemic

Is there a role for the Residents Association to help? The answer is Yes!
Words associated with the pandemic as a resident in your building
Mental health symptoms during the COVID-19 pandemic
AMONG ADULTS AGE 50–80

- 28% worse anxiety or worry
- 19% worse sleep
- 19% worse depression or sadness
Isolation & Loneliness

**Objective**
Isolation involves quantifiable measurements, such as the size of one's social network (and the frequency of engagement with it), availability of transportation, and ability to access resources and information.

**Subjective**
Loneliness (also known as subjective isolation) denotes how people perceive their experience and whether or not they feel isolated.
Isolation is a health issue.

Research shows that the negative health effects of chronic isolation and loneliness, while harmful at any age, are especially dangerous for people over 50. Social isolation and loneliness are associated with:

- Higher blood pressure
- Increased susceptibility to the flu
- Greater risk of heart disease
- Earlier onset of dementia
Subjective feelings of loneliness can increase the risk of death by as much as **45 percent**.

- **17%** of adults age 65 and older are isolated.
- **46%** of women age 75 and older live alone.

Older adults who describe themselves as lonely have a **59% greater risk of functional decline** and a **45% greater risk of death**.
Causes of why a person is agitated, hostile and/or upset

Pre, during, post COVID

Frustration or annoyance
Disappointment
Fear
Stress
Anxiety
Confusion and/or memory loss
Change in physical ability
Feeling powerless/Loss of control & choices
Projection/expectations (people not responding to situations how you think they should respond)
Disorders associated with long term stress
A holistic approach to activities/programs

- Mind
- Body
- Soul/Spirit
During November and December 2020, engAGED conducted a poll of Aging Network organizations and community partners.

In the poll, engAGED sought to learn about social engagement programs the Aging Network and community partners offer that fall under four main themes:

- arts and creative expression activities
- health and wellness activities
- volunteer engagement activities
- learning activities
Arts and Creative Expression Activities

Top Five Virtual Programs Offered During the Pandemic

Radio Show Programming
Pen Pal Programs
Book Clubs
Storytelling
Crafting
Health and Wellness Activities

During the pandemic, poll respondents indicate top health & wellness virtual activities/support:

- Peer Support
- Telephone Reassurance
- Wellness Checks
- Meditation/Mindfulness
Volunteer Engagement Activities

The Aging Network and its partners provide older adults and people with disabilities with critical support essential to maintaining their independence and remaining in their communities. These programs were most successful at converting to virtual formats.

AmeriCorps Seniors Programs
https://americorps.gov/serve/americorps-seniors

Includes: foster grandparents, senior companions, community volunteer opportunities

Intergenerational Mentoring
doing *Good* is Good for *You* Volunteering

**Reduces**
- depression
- chronic pain
- stress
- risk of disease
- social isolation

**Increases**
- physical fitness
- mental functionality
- sense of purpose
- social connection
- longevity
Learning Activities

Most popular virtual learning experiences

Educational Classes
Lifelong Learning Seminars
Technology/Computer Assistance
Questions to consider:

How do we create a positive environment?

How do we help residents overcome that feeling of loss of control and helplessness?

How do we make sure everyone knows it is okay to acknowledge how difficult the past year has been & will continue to be?

How do we bring a sense of normalcy, where everyone can interact with each other and be our social selves?
Random Acts of Kindness
Warm & Fuzzies

You’re a natural leader!

Thanks for being so easy to talk to!

You are a gem!

I’m so glad we met!

You have the best laugh!

I’m inspired by you!

You’re all that and a super-size bag of chips!
You’ve Been “Flocked” Door Decorating

Flock people’s doors (surprise decorating someone else’s door with flamingo accessories). We had 17 people sign up. They got a Flamingo cup from Dollar Tree for participating. At the end of the week, we had 3 winners with a prize drawing.

**Program Details:**
Chose a door to decorate with flamingo magnets, and a baggy with “You’ve been flocked” and gives the instructions of what to do – decorate someone else’s door.

**Materials:** Flamingo magnets, leis, pink ribbon curls, anything to go along with the theme
Share your ideas...
Your simple act of kindness can be someone else's miracle.
Resources

Engaged The National Resource Center for Engaging Older Adults
https://www.engagingolderadults.org/

Searchable HUB for programming
https://www.engagingolderadults.org/hub

Senior Planet
https://seniorplanet.org/