



PREVENTING SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS



As we grow older, we may experience many life changes that affect our feelings of social connectedness. Maintaining social ties with family, friends, and community is an important part of maintaining one's physical and emotional health. Chronic loneliness and social isolation can increase your risk for serious health problems later in life. The good news is there are many ways to grow, maintain, and strengthen your social network.

Ways to connect when you're feeling isolated:

- **Daily phone calls.** Schedule a time each day to call a family member or friend.
 - If you have an iPhone or tablet, try [FaceTime](#), [Skype](#), or [Zoom](#) to video chat and "meet" virtually. You will need to create user accounts to use Skype or Zoom.
 - Not sure how to use those applications? Call a friend, family member, or the Council on Aging for help.
 - If you have a desktop or laptop computer and a Google account, you can use [Google Hangouts](#) to create a video chat and share it through email with any friends or family members you would like to speak with.
- **Get to know your neighbors.** Check in with neighbors or get to know them better through phone calls, text messages, or emails. Arrange visits, walks, or shared meals when possible.
- **Stay physically active.** Regular exercise naturally decreases stress and improves your mood. A group exercise class is a great way to connect with others while keeping fit.
- **Grow your social network.** Try a new group activity, join a club or support group. Pick up a new hobby or revisit a former one.
- **Join or start a book club.** Reading can be a relaxing hobby that helps keep your brain active. Consider forming a monthly book club with friends and connect over your shared interest in reading. You can meet virtually or in-person (if you are able to). You can also access digital books if you have a digital reading device and a Chatham County Public

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Library card. For more information about the Chatham County Public Library, call (919) 545-8084 or visit the [Chatham County Public Library website](#) for more information.

- **Play an online game.** Smartphones and tablets have Application Stores with games such as *Scrabble*, *Monopoly*, card games and more! Many are free or low cost. You can also play games with family members or friends who use these apps.
- **Need assistance with technology?** Reach out to a family member, friend, or caregiver to teach you how to use digital resources and devices. You can also use a guide like the following one on ways to become more comfortable with technology: <https://www.aginginplace.org/how-to-become-tech-savvy-for-seniors-in-10-days/>
- **Write a letter.** Snail mail is not out of style! Write a letter to a friend, family member, or a neighbor, or find a new pen pal.
- **Become a volunteer in your community.** Volunteering can deepen your connection to your community and provide increased social connection to others. For more information on volunteer opportunities, visit the [Chatham Connecting](#) website.

Remember: Social connection looks different for everyone as everyone has different needs and interests. Some people may feel hesitant to ask for help with connecting to others. People should be encouraged to express their preferences and then have these respected.

Resources

- **Chatham County Council on Aging**, www.chathamcouncilonaging.org
(919) 542-4512; Eastern Chatham Senior Center, 365 Highway 87 N, Pittsboro
(919) 742-3975; Western Chatham Senior Center, 112 Village Lake Road, Siler City
The Council offers friendly calls to seniors in the community as well as a variety of different programs (including photography, hiking groups, group exercise classes and more!) to engage seniors and provide space to make connections. To enroll, contact or visit the Eastern or Western Centers.
- **NC Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) Hope Line**, (866) 578-4673
<http://www.ncbam.org/ministry-outreaches.html>
The NCBAM Hope Line receives calls daily, 9:00 am to 9:00 pm from individuals 65+. Trained staff and volunteers encourage callers with a friendly voice and a listening ear.
- **AARP Foundation, Connect2Affect**
The [AARP Connect2Affect website](#) can provide you with many types of resources on ways to connect in the community. Simply visit the website and fill out the short questionnaire on their website to access resources in your area. To access their resources, follow this link: <https://connect2affect.org>

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