Elder Loneliness & Isolation
Fact, Fiction or Epidemic?

Presentation Objectives
➢ To explore and define loneliness and isolation and the impact they can have on your clients' health and well-being
➢ To explain how audience members can identify client loneliness
➢ To discuss what can be done to mitigate isolation and loneliness through the power of friendship
➢ To incorporate studies and statistics that illustrate the significant role loneliness and isolation play in the quality of elder life

Presentation Overview
➢ Isolation: A Circle of Loss
➢ The Societal Impact of Elder Loneliness and Isolation – Fact of Fiction?
➢ Identifying Loneliness: An Isolation Assessment Tool for Your Clients
➢ The Power of Friendship – An Antidote to Loneliness and Isolation
➢ Sources and resources. Contact information
Three States of Being:

Which would you choose for yourself?

Which do you see among your clients?

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**SOLITUDE**

✓ Being alone without feeling lonely

✓ Nourishes peace, tranquility and renewal

✓ Restores us mind, body and spirit

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**LONELINESS**

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**ISOLATION**
Loneliness ...

- the personal feeling of isolation
- the personal feeling of not belonging
- the personal sense of distance and separation from others
- Feeling lonely depletes us mind, body and spirit

Loneliness ➔ Disconnection
ISOLATION

A Circle of Loss

Self-agency

Important relationships/meaningful community engagement

Personal capacities

Significant physical environments

Hopes, dreams; yearnings & goals
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Impact of Elder Isolation: Fact or Fiction?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social isolation is an national health epidemic:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 8 million adults age 50 and older are affected by isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>True</strong> OR <strong>False</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness and isolation can be as detrimental to your health as smoking two packs of cigarettes a day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>True</strong> OR <strong>False</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially isolated elders are more prone to falls and malnourishment. They are more frequently readmitted to hospital and more often permanently institutionalized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>True</strong> OR <strong>False</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>The Impact of Elder Isolation: Fact or Fiction?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Isolation is linked to heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, high blood pressure, stroke, lung disease and suicide</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>True</strong> OR <strong>False</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially isolated elders are more likely to die from half of all disease-related causes of death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>True</strong> OR <strong>False</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26% of adults face increased risk of early death due to subjective feeling of loneliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>True</strong> OR <strong>False</strong></td>
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</table>
The Impact of Elder Isolation: Fact or Fiction?

46% of women age 75 and older live alone
True OR False

According to the AARP Public Policy Institute, Medicare currently spends $2.7 Billion more a year to treat isolated elder citizens - than would be necessary had such elders the social support network vital to healthy ageing
True OR False

The Impact of Elder Isolation: Fact or Fiction?

Lonely people have a 32% increased risk of developing dementia
True OR False

Every day in the US 10,000 Baby Boomers turn 65
True OR False

In the Twin Cities metro area alone there are 25,000 people living alone over the age of 65
True OR False
Social Isolation ...

Is measurable in terms of factors such as:

➢ the size of one’s social network
➢ personal mobility
➢ availability of transportation
➢ access to community

Causes of isolation are cumulative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transportation Challenges</th>
<th>Lack of accessible and affordable transportation options</th>
<th>Driving retirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor Health and Well-being</td>
<td>Untreated hearing loss</td>
<td>Mobility impairments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frailty</td>
<td>Poor mental health</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Solutions depend on relationship-building initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer-based ride programs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Livable/age-friendly community initiatives</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Falls prevention programs</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chronic disease self-management</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Causes of isolation are cumulative

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Life Transitions, Role Loss or Change</th>
<th>Solutions depend on relationship-building initiatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaving the workforce</td>
<td>Support groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of a partner or friends</td>
<td>Lifelong learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a caregiver</td>
<td>Senior centers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creative/artful aging</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Societal Barriers</th>
<th>Intergenerational programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Ageism</td>
<td>Lifelong learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of opportunities for</td>
<td>Policies to support an older workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>older adults to engage and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contribute</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Causes of isolation are cumulative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack of Access and Inequality</th>
<th>Resiliency and empowerment models</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>Home-sharing models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural living</td>
<td>Technology training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginalized groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(racial/ethnic minorities, LGBT, etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AARP Isolation Assessment
How Connected Is the Older Adult You Know?

1. The older adult I know lives alone.  
   ○ Yes  ○ No

2. The older adult I know sees or talks to family members and friends at least once a week.  
   ○ Yes  ○ No

3. The older adult I know provides daily care or support to a family member or friend who needs help with everyday tasks (such as preparing meals, providing transportation and grocery shopping).  
   ○ Yes  ○ No

4. The older adult I know almost always has a ride or the transportation they need to get where they want to go.  
   ○ Yes  ○ No

5. The older adult I know finds it difficult or impossible to leave their home without assistance.  
   ○ Yes  ○ No

6. The older adult I know avoids socializing because it's hard to understand conversations, especially when there's background noise.  
   ○ Yes  ○ No
## Isolation Assessment

### How Connected Is the Older Adult You Know?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>The older adult I know feels they make a meaningful contribution to their community.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The older adult I know participates on a weekly basis in social activities or attends organized groups, such as choirs, cultural performances, exercise classes, group meals, support groups, etc.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The older adult I know often feels that they lack companionship.</td>
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## AARP Isolation Assessment

### How Connected Is the Older Adult You Know?

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<th>Question</th>
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<th>No</th>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>The older adult I know often feels left out.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>The older adult I know knows someone they could rely on if they had a problem and needed help or advice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>The older adult I know has suffered a major loss or change, like the death of a loved one or retirement.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which Of These Epidemics Can Every Single One of Us Do Something About Every Single Day?

The Opioid Epidemic

OR

The Isolation Epidemic

One organization. One Example.

Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly (LBFE)

Ending Elder Loneliness & Isolation through the Power of Friendship
Who has poured friendship into you lately?

Beth’s Story ...

Beth, 77 lives alone in a high-rise in downtown Minneapolis. Her income is below the poverty line, and she is confined to a wheelchair. Beth worked as a clothing designer, and her decades-long passion was creating and sewing beautiful clothes. Unfortunately, arthritis and failing eyesight put an end to her sewing days. Her other passion is baking, but she has difficulty accessing her kitchen shelves and appliances, so she seldom makes the effort. She is a widow of 22 years; her only daughter lives overseas, and visits, letters and calls are rare.

Beth’s Glass:

Human Contact this week:
The hurried driver who delivered her groceries
The LBFE Antidote to Elder Loneliness & Isolation

Ending Elder Loneliness through the Power of Friendship

LBFE’s Friendship Programs:

✓ Visiting Companion
Pair one-on-one with an elder to share meaningful friendship

✓ Phone Companion
Brighten an elder's life with weekly chats

✓ Friendship & Flowers Visitor
Deliver smiles, warmth and treats to homebound elders
An LBFE Invitation to the Elders You Serve
Onsite Where They Live

NOT-TO-BE-MISSED!

Come on down and play Wheel of Friendship!
Meet Minnesota’s answer to Vanna White
Spin the wheel
Win wonderful prizes

This fun, interactive gathering — packed with meaning, laughter and joy — explores the role friends play in our lives.

Bring your friends, they’ll be glad you did!

Remember when ...

making friends was as easy as child’s play ...
Thank you!

🎵 For Being a Friend 🎵

Organization and Speaker Contact Information and Resources

Little Brothers – Friends of the Elderly
Website: [https://www.littlebrothersmn.org/](https://www.littlebrothersmn.org/)
Phone: 612-721-1400
Address: 1845 East Lake St. Minneapolis, MN 55407

Service area: Minneapolis, St. Paul and inner-ring suburbs

Elder Member Application/Referral Form
[https://www.littlebrothersmn.org/become-a-member/](https://www.littlebrothersmn.org/become-a-member/)

Volunteer application form:
[https://www.littlebrothersmn.org/volunteer-application/](https://www.littlebrothersmn.org/volunteer-application/)

Dignity of Friendship Video [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_YmnnBJYEYg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_YmnnBJYEYg)

Speaker
Georgia Afton
Community Outreach Director
Little Brothers – Friends of the Elderly
gafton@littlebrothersmn.org
612-746-0732 (desk)
612-825-2349 (cell)
Sources and Resources

AARP Isolation Assessment
How Connected Is the Older Adult You Know?
https://connect2affect.org/assessment/how-connected-are-you/#result=2

AARP Connect to Affect
https://connect2affect.org/

Senior Linkage Line
https://www.seniorlinkageline.com/

Optimal Aging Portal (Canada)
https://www.mcmasteroptimalaging.org/blog/detail/professionals-blog/2016/04/08/loneliness-and-social-isolation-are-important-health-risks-in-the-elderly

Cigna: U.S. Loneliness Index

How do you identify or recognize the most lonely (UK)
https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/frequently-asked-questions/identify-most-isolated/

Listening to elders’ stories: Transforming nursing students’ perceptions about gerontology nursing
https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/47198072.pdf