

Be Connected

In today's fast paced world we might think that it is easier than ever to stay connected, however 19% of Americans age 62–91 experience loneliness which is shown to increase the likelihood of mortality by 26%.¹ Older adults who report feeling lonely also have a greater rate of physical and mental health issues. The good news is that community involvement can help reduce many of the effects of loneliness. Creating engagement opportunities for the older adults in your community can help them to age and live well.

Engagement benefits everyone

Helping older adults stay engaged and connected not only benefits the older adult, it benefits the community as well. Strengthen your community by creating options where older adults can stay connected and share their knowledge and skills. Organizations that provide older residents with volunteer service options can extend limited capital, increase services, and create greater awareness. Communities with diverse engagement options see a positive impact on their social capital.

Types of engagement opportunities:

Not everyone is the same and not every engagement option should be either. Create options that benefit the organization, community and the older adults. Here are some of the different types of opportunities you can create:

- Volunteerism
- Lifelong Learning
- Civic Involvement
- Recreation
- Spirituality

How to create an engagement opportunity

Remember these steps when creating an engagement opportunity:

- Assess what programs, tools and resources are already available and identify gaps.
- Survey older adults to find out what they enjoy doing.
- Use assessment and survey results to develop a program, activity or event to meet the needs.
- Write up a plan of action with tasks divisions.
- Identify potential barriers to participation.
- Find community partners to help you.
- Look for funding (e.g., grants, sponsors)
- Get started!

¹ <http://connect2affect.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/A-Profile-of-Social-Connectedness.pdf>
Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors for Mortality: A Meta-Analytic Review Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Timothy B. Smith, Mark Baker, Tyler Harris, David Stephenson First Published March 11, 2015 (Holt-Lunstad, 2010)

Engagement Resources

Volunteerism	<p>Support volunteering by recruiting volunteers for your organization or by assisting the older adults in your life to find the volunteer opportunities that are right for them.</p> <p>Search engines for posting volunteer opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• https://www.volunteermatch.org/• http://createthegood.org/volunteer-search <p>Opportunity for older adults to mentor small business owners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• https://www.score.org/ <p>Partner with Senior Corps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps
Lifelong Learning	<p>Ready to start your own lifelong learning program? Start by connecting older adults in your community to existing opportunities at community centers, libraries, universities, and community colleges. Community partners that already offer opportunities can help guide you in the right direction. There are also online resources that can help you get started:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• www.roadsscholar.org/about/lifelong-learning-institutes/• www.osherfoundation.org/
Civic Involvement	<p>Civic engagement provides older adults with a purpose, a way to meet similarly minded people and the opportunity to make a difference.</p> <p>Options for involvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neighborhood associations• Civic or social groups such as AARP, Kiwanis, or the Lyons Club• Texas Silver Haired Legislature http://www.txshl.org/
Spirituality	<p>It is important to provide older adults interested in spirituality or religion with the opportunity to stay engaged in a spiritual life as they age.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The American Society on Aging outlined 10 activities that can help older adults to connect to spirituality. http://www.asaging.org/blog/top-10-spiritual-practices-older-adults-living-retirement-or-long-term-care-communities• AARP article with tips from 6 spiritual leaders on encouraging personal and spiritual growth: http://www.aarp.org/personal-growth/spirituality-faith/info-02-2011/keys_to_spiritual_growth.html
Recreation	<p>Creating recreation opportunities can reach older adults that might not get involved in other engagement opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highlight local senior centers or plan activities for older adults at community centers or libraries. http://www.211texas.org/• Encourage outdoor activities. Highlight volunteer/engagement opportunities at community parks such as park clean up or campsite hosts. https://tpwd.texas.gov/volunteer/• Foster interest in new hobbies. Plan an art class, feature a new board game, host a dance.