



Session 1: Loneliness and Companionship

How to recognize the effects of social isolation and loneliness in our elders.

Best Practices:

Being Aware of How Social Isolation and Loneliness Impact Mental and Physical Well-Being

Mental Well Being	Physical Well Being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of interest in personal care • Feelings of anger toward others may cause elders to withdraw. • Diminished social circles and low-quality social relationships. • Lack of interest in previous hobbies or activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased risk for Dementia • May hasten premature death. • Sleeping more throughout the day. Disturbed sleep patterns • Frailty related to an increased sedentary lifestyle.

Identifying Loneliness, Helplessness, and Boredom in the Nursing Home

Loneliness May Look Like	Helplessness May Look Like	Boredom May Look Like
Expressions of sadness resulting in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tearfulness • Repetitive actions like hand ringing • Voicing feelings of despair • Blinds closed • Preferring to remain in bed throughout the day • Expressions of physical pain or discomfort 	Unintended weight loss : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resulting from lack of interest in food or inability to feed oneself Unkempt personal appearance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resulting from a decline in personal care habits or resistance to bathing, toileting, dressing for the day 	Confusion : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searching for loved ones • Outward communications: calling out for loved ones • Wandering in search of loved ones • Rummaging through personal belongings looking for personal contacts like phone numbers or addresses

Links to Supporting Documents

- [CDC: Loneliness and Social Isolation Linked to Serious Health Conditions](#)
- [Roots of Loneliness - Signs of Loneliness: What to Watch For \(and When to Worry\)](#)
- [Higher Social Engagement and Frequent Contact May Reduce Risk for Dementia](#)

Discussion Questions:

- Share some examples from your experience of how certain environments, healthcare processes, and caregiver interaction may lead to loneliness for our elders.
- Share some examples of how your home/community has worked to combat loneliness and social isolation.
- Share some opportunities that you have observed in your home promoting social connectedness between:
 - Our elders and other elders
 - Our elders and their family & friends
 - Our elders and our staff