



## Session 4: Tackling Loneliness and Promoting Social Connections among Nursing Home Residents

What are Social Isolation and Loneliness? How are they experienced by those in the Nursing Home?

### Best Practices:

#### A Comparison of Social Isolation and Loneliness

Social Isolation	Loneliness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of meaningful contact</li> <li>• A lack of social contact with others</li> <li>• Few opportunities for connecting with others</li> <li>• Separation from others based upon age, gender, sexual orientation, geography, spirituality, ethnicity/language, health, and in elders, the loss of family, partners, and friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of meaningful contact</li> <li>• An emotion or feeling</li> <li>• The difference between <i>desired</i> and <i>actual</i> contact with others</li> <li>• Separation and feeling alone</li> <li>• Range from discomfort to excruciatingly painful</li> <li>• Distressing</li> </ul>

#### The Impact of Loneliness on Physical and Mental Health

Physical Health	Mental Health
<b>Increases the risk of:</b>	<b>Increases the risk of:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing coronary heart disease and stroke</li> <li>• High blood pressure and Inflammation in the body</li> <li>• Functional decline (e.g., climbing a flight of stairs, walking)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memory loss and dementia</li> <li>• Tendency toward depression</li> <li>• Predictive suicide in old age</li> </ul>

#### Topics in the News

- [Finding a Purpose Can Lower Risk of Loneliness in Older Adults, Study Shows](#)
- [Large New Study Links Social Isolation to Dementia Risk](#)

#### Links to Supporting Documents

- [Emotional Loneliness is Associated With Mortality Among Mentally Intact Nursing Home Residents With and Without Cancer: A Five-Year Follow-Up Study](#)
- [Loneliness Predicts Increased Blood Pressure: 5-Year Cross-Lagged Analyses in Middle-Aged And Older Adults](#)
- [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine - Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults: Opportunities for the Health Care System](#)
- [Loneliness, Hopelessness And Suicide In Later Life: A Case-Control Psychological Autopsy Study In Rural China](#)
- [Predictors and Subjective Causes of Loneliness in an Aged Population](#)
- [Role of Resilience and Social Support in the Relationship Between Loneliness and Suicidal Ideation among Chinese Nursing Home Residents](#)

#### Discussion Questions:

- What types of behaviors or comments do you notice among elders suggesting that they lack meaningful, social relationships and/ or feel lonely in their daily lives?
- Pay attention to what effect social isolation and/or loneliness are having on our elders' daily lives. What have you noticed?
- Identify impact points when an elder in our care might experience risk for increased social isolation or loneliness (i.e., admission, room change, discontinuation of therapy services, etc.)