

Social Connectivity Self-Management Plan

- Develop or maintain a support network.
- Stay physically active.

- Talk or virtually connect with someone regularly (family, friend, or neighbor).

Green Flags—All Clear



If you:

- Connect with others
- Have formal and/or informal supports you are satisfied with

What this means ...

- You have social connections.

Keep up the great work!

Yellow Flags—Caution



If you:

- Feel disconnected from family, friends, or neighbors.
- Overeat OR skip meals
- Experience changes in sleep
- Have difficulty concentrating or staying focused

- Feel irritable or angry
- Feel sad or worried
- Feel frustrated

What this means ...

- You are not satisfied with your social connections.
- You will benefit from reading the tips on the next page.

If feelings do not improve, talk with a member of your health care team:

Name:

Number:

Instructions:

If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.

Red Flags—Stop and Think



If you:

- Feel hopeless and helpless
- Have thoughts of self-harm

What this means ...

- You need to talk to a health care or mental health care professional immediately.
- Call 9-1-1.

If possible, notify your health care provider's office.

Name:

Number:

Follow these instructions: **CALL 9-1-1**

If you notice a Red Flag, **CALL 9-1-1. Emergency!**

Social Connectivity Fast Facts

- According to research studies, social connectivity impacts your mental and physical health.
- People who feel connected report lower levels of anxiety and depression, higher self-esteem, and greater empathy for others.
- Social connectivity also builds trust and cooperation.
- During emergencies, disasters, and pandemics, the need for social connectivity is still important, as physical distance and social distancing keeps us apart from loved ones, family, friends, and regular activities (e.g., senior center activities or community center classes).

What can you do?

- **Acknowledge** that being physically distant is stressful.
- **Stay connected.** Consider FaceTime, phone calls, text messaging, Zoom, Skype, WebEx, or virtual telecommunications application that provides video chat and/or voice calls using a computer, tablet, or mobile device. Some senior centers have virtual exercise and activity programs. When reaching out to others, consider writing a letter, sharing a receipt, or sharing a favorite memory.
- **Do benefit finding.** “Looking for the good is an important strategy,” says Julie Kolzet, PhD., a licensed psychologist in New York City (who also sees patients remotely). One example: If you are an older adult working from home, this may be an opportunity for autonomy and your commute time is decreased.
- **Practice mindful breathing.** Match your in-breath with your out-breath and focus on scanning your body to relax and calm. Though doing mindful breathing for 15 minutes each day is recommended, consider starting with 3–5 minutes.
- **Be kind.** Research shows that when you do something nice for someone else, your brain’s pleasure and reward centers light up. This is called the “helper’s high.”
- **Share something good.** Consider sharing something small, like a funny emoji, cute picture, or positive quote. This can improve your mood and perhaps will help improve some else’s mood, too.
- **Change your expectations.** We add to our stress levels by creating unrealistic goals. Be gentle on yourself. Consider breaking daily tasks into small doable steps that are easier to achieve. Share your successes with others.
- **Manage news intake and stay flexible.** Stay informed but stick to reliable news outlets as rumors spread quickly and feed into panic. Information changes over time, so uncertainty may be normal.
- **Consider the Program to Encourage Active and Rewarding Lives (PEARLS).** This program can be offered over the telephone. It is evidence-based and has proven to show improvements for people socially isolated.
- **Practice self-care.** Consider taking time to focus on your health and wellness. Practice good hygiene, get regular exercise, stay hydrated, and eat a healthy diet. Prayer and/or meditation can improve peace of mind.
- **Use online resources** such as the Social Wellness Checklist (National Institutes of Health) at <https://bit.ly/3yXk2Cl>.

Aging and Disability Services

Aging and Disability Services (ADS)—the Area Agency on Aging for King County—plans, coordinates, and advocates for comprehensive services for older adults, family caregivers, and people with disabilities throughout Seattle and King County. For information about services, call 844-348-5464 or e-mail info@communitylivingconnections.org.



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