

Useful tips for older adult wellness



Managing problems

Challenges in older adulthood can bring about thoughts and feelings that can cause distress or unhappiness. Some elders may face difficulty managing chronic illnesses, lack of freedom, inability to do things they used to do before, the loss of loved ones or financial problems and these may make them feel worse. Gaining a sense of control over these problems will reduce the chances of getting stressed.

Problem solving

1. Problem: Identify a problem and make it as specific as possible.

2. Solution: Think of all the different options to solve your problem. Consider what someone else might do in your position. After going through the pros and cons of each solution, pick one solution which you would prefer to start with.

3. Action: Think of when you will put your solution into practice. Write down the specific date, time and resources required. Consider asking your family and friends for assistance.

Once your action plan is set, run with it! Examine the result of your action plan after a few days to see if it worked. In case it did not lead you to your goal then choose the next solution option.



Managing chronic illnesses

Diabetes, blood pressure, knee pain, etc. might make you stop doing things that make you happy. Managing your sickness and pain will help you continue doing those things and living a healthy life. Here are some tips to manage your sickness & pain:

- Visit the doctor as soon as you notice signs of giddiness, blurry vision, chest pain, swelling of feet, continuous cough or uneasiness.
- Take your medication as advised by your doctor.
- Maintain a healthy diet.
- Make sure you sleep well.
- Exercise as per your doctor's advice.

Dealing with memory issues

Some older adults may also face some memory issues and the isolation brought on by the pandemic which makes managing these worse. Some tips to manage these are.

1. Explore professional support like hospital run programs, therapy groups, support groups, etc.
2. Ask trusted friends and family members to check in from time to time.
3. Practice skills like money management, washing clothes, dressing oneself, communicating with others again and again.
4. Be involved in activities around the house, ask for help if needed. Also, engage in hobbies and enjoyable activities as these help keep the mind active.
5. Memory issues can be distressing for the people experiencing them. The frustration, guilt, shame, anger, helplessness, etc. may show up in different ways. Be sensitive to these emotions and try to create a space that welcomes and honours these emotions rather than shuns them.
6. Ensure that the physical surroundings are free of sharp objects, glass, breakable objects, so as to keep the environment safe.
7. Try to keep the physical space as stable as possible. Do not change the furniture, colour of walls, appliances, etc. often.



Managing loneliness

Many older adults find joy in activities like spending more time with family, enjoying recreational activities, meeting friends and relatives, etc. However, older adults may be particularly susceptible to loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic, as they are more likely to self-isolate due to the risk of infection, while also potentially having fewer supports in place to feel less lonely. Older adults can stave off loneliness during this time in the following ways:

- Make phone calls to relatives and friends on a regular schedule, so that they can check in with you and learn about your needs.
- Engaging with enjoyable activities like stitching, gardening, mechanical work, carpentry, art, etc.
- Ask for help from family members when you need it and be specific about how they can help.
- Check to see if your community offers specific shopping hours for seniors so that you can shop for food during low-risk times when absolutely necessary.

What can you do if you have been feeling like life is not worth living anymore?

- Tell someone you trust about how you have been feeling. There is no need to be ashamed of your thoughts because most people have felt the same at some point in their life.
- Explore getting involved in virtual social activities around you.
- Try to think of things that made you happy before you began to feel sad and set a date and time to do them.
- Participate in the activities happening around you like playing with your grandchildren or cooking.
- Seek professional help, if you feel like you need it.



Here are some signs which indicate that an older adult might have thoughts of suicide:

- Withdrawing from family/social activities.
- Not enjoying activities that s/he enjoyed before.
- Frequently talking about dying.
- Expressing feelings of regret or guilt.
- Distributing property and possessions among family
- Collecting medicines, poison or other tools that could harm her/him.
- Increased intake of alcohol.

What can you do to help an elder who is feeling like life is not worth living anymore?

- If your loved one shows any of the signs mentioned above, take them to the doctor and inform her/him about these signs.
- If any medication is prescribed, purchase it and help the elder to take it regularly.
- Listen carefully to the elder without blaming or scolding them for having these thoughts & reply with kind words.
- Take away anything that the elder could use to harm themselves (e.g. ropes, medicines, poison).
- Invite her/him for walks or any enjoyable activities that they can participate in.
- Make sure there is someone with her/him at all times until the doctor says otherwise.
- You can also talk to a mental health professional about ways to help your loved one.



You can contact the NGO Dignity Foundation, which works with the elderly and senior citizens. You can reach them at: <https://dignityfoundation.com/> and their helpline number is 18002678780

The Government helpline for elders, Elderline can be reached at 14567