



# Fighting Isolation

We are social animals who thrive on stimulation

# WHAT IS ISOLATION?

- Isolation: when someone lacks social contact with friends, family or the community.



# WHAT IS LONELINESS?

- These are two types: **emotional** and **social**.
  - **Emotional** loneliness is when you feel lonely because you lack a significant other who you can form a close bond with.
  - **Social** loneliness is caused by lack of regular friends or a social network.

# CAUSES OF LONELINESS & ISOLATION

- 1. Lack of face-to-face interaction**
- 2. Infrequent telephone contact**  
Where face-to-face contact isn't possible, having regular phone calls can help



# CAUSES OF LONELINESS & ISOLATION

## 3. Lack of meaningful relationships

As we age, our friends and family may move away, go to live in residential homes or pass away. This leads to a shrinking social circle.



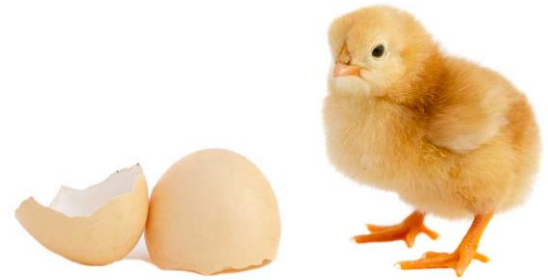
# CAUSES OF LONELINESS & ISOLATION

- 4. Lack of confidence**  
Prevents talking to people or going out for fear of being judged
- 5. Isolation from activities**  
Having to stop doing favourite or regular activities contributes to loneliness. This may be due to illness, not able to drive or difficulty walking.



# WHICH COMES FIRST? CHICKEN OR THE EGG?

- A study from the Rush Alzheimer's Disease Centre in Chicago followed 1,100 seniors aged 70 to 90 over 5 years. All were healthy of mind when it started.
- The purpose was to determine whether the early signs of **dementia** caused social isolation, or whether the lack of sociability caused mental decline.
- It found that the more social seniors had a 70% reduction in the rate of cognitive decline, compared with their less social peers.



# BUSTING A FEW MYTHS ABOUT SENIORS

- **Most seniors are rich.** In fact, 50% of Canadian seniors live on less than \$23,700.
- ***Most seniors will end up in nursing homes.*** In fact, only 4% aged 65 -84 go into residential care. This rises to 15% once 85+.
- ***Dementias are going to overwhelm the health system.*** In fact, only 6% aged 65 – 84 will present with a dementia. This rises to 20% once 85+.



# CONNECTING THE DOTS... OR NEURONS

- *Socializing relieves stress.* Studies are finding a huge connection between stress and problems with the brain.
- *Our brains were designed for managing relationships.* Interacting with only one or two people may not be enough.



# POSSIBLE REASONS WHY WE SELF-ISOLATE

- Low self esteem
- Depression
- Confusion
- Illness
- Hiding something, like a failing memory
- Anxiety
- Fear of getting lost or having a panic attack
- Losing our thoughts and words

# BOREDOM IS OUR ENEMY



- “If you don’t use it, you lose it”
- Just as our muscles atrophy without exercise, so do our brains without stimulus.

# SOLUTIONS FOR FIGHTING ISOLATION



- “The cure for boredom is curiosity.
- There is no cure for curiosity.”

Allen Parr

# IDENTIFY YOUR SOCIAL SUPPORTS

- The trouble with aging is losing those who go before us.



Considering isolation is bad for your health, are you close to:

- Transportation
- Medical services
- Markets/Shops
- Recreation

# WAYS TO REDUCE LONELINESS

- Get out in your community
- Sign up for classes or programs
- Avoid negativity
- Volunteer
- Take up a hobby
- Share your life skills with others
- Become a friendly visitor
- Find a room mate
- Tutor students
- Seek help



# FRIENDLY VISITING PROGRAMS

## Volunteer-Visitors:

- Improves the mental health of people who are isolated.
- Rewards the volunteer with purpose and satisfaction through helping someone.



# ANIMAL FRIENDS

Dogs are loyal companions to go out with and meet others.

Cats are also social animals, even if they pretend otherwise.

Birds can be lovely pets and require less upkeep.

Fish have personalities too and provide a calming influence.





# WHEN FAMILY & FRIENDS ARE FAR AWAY

Technology can connect you to the people you love

A computer or iPad is a window to the world.

You can see and talk live to loved-ones.

You can surf for information, news, entertainment.

Or shop without leaving home.



# WHEN FAMILY & FRIENDS ARE FAR AWAY

Help Someone to Get Started

Show what the Internet can do.

Start with email.

Surf to websites of interest.

Introduce them to free classes at libraries, seniors centers or the Apple stores.



# BETTER AT HOME (SUBSIDIZED HELP)

**Better at Home** helps seniors with simple non-medical tasks so they can live independently at home and remain connected to their community.

Services may include **light housekeeping, transportation, minor home repairs, friendly visiting, yard work.**



# CHOICE IN SUPPORTS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

CSIL is a self-managed care option: funds are provided to eligible clients who are able to manage their own home support services.

To qualify you must:

- Be 19+
- Approved for Home Support through your case manager
- Require daily personal assistance
- Be medically and functionally stable
- Be able to direct all aspects of your care/have someone do this for you

# ADVOCATING FOR SENIORS

- Isobel MacKenzie is the Seniors Advocate for BC. She looks at the systemic issues affecting seniors and makes recommendations. Many reports are on the website. [www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca](http://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca)
- Jay Chalke is BC's Ombudsperson. This independent office responds to enquiries and complaints from individuals of all ages. [www.bcombudsperson.ca](http://www.bcombudsperson.ca)
- Public Guardian and Trustee: For individuals in need with no supports, appointed trustees take on management of their affairs. [www.trustee.bc.ca](http://www.trustee.bc.ca)
- Local municipal and non-profit service agencies like 411 Seniors and the West End Seniors Network, provide advocacy and counselling services.



Prepared by ML Burke, Seniors Resource Coordinator

For more information about CHF BC contact [members@chf.bc.ca](mailto:members@chf.bc.ca)