



Staying Connected during Covid-19

In Maine, being older is usually about work, creativity, volunteerism, and being on the go. It's about farming and fishing, teaching and learning, legislating and governing. Now, however, as we face Covid-19, a virus that has significantly increased risk of complications and death for older people, we are heeding the call to self-isolate to avoid exposure and are staying home. This may result in significant loneliness for those who will be missing the things they normally do and the people they normally engage. This goes for everyone, not just older adults! However, many older adults live rurally, are not connected to social media, and are used to connecting in person. So, there's never been a more important time for us to find new ways to safely connect with each other. Here are some ideas for how we can all stay connected during Covid-19.

Tap Into What Already Exists

Many communities, mostly through law enforcement agencies, but not always, have a daily check-in program that people can sign up for to get a daily call. While these programs aren't really intended for socialization, they're a great way to make sure someone checks in daily to make sure things are ok. Talk to local law enforcement to find out what's available.

Retool Existing Programs & Services

Maine is home to the largest group of "lifelong communities" – intentional community initiatives aimed at making communities work for a lifetime. They're hosting community lunches, holding community events, and running friendly visitor programs. With a little ingenuity, these communities are now retooling their events – hosting Lunch on the Go instead of Lunch with Friends, and shifting friendly visitor programs to phone and video visits. Many companionship programs are shifting to phone-only contacts, which are just as vital as an in-person visit. Those same programs are also now picking up food and pharmacy orders as well.

Start Something New

Churches, affinity clubs, and even housing projects usually have the phone numbers for all the members. It only takes a few people to organize a phone tree to check in daily, share important information, and make a connection. It's critical for all social and spiritual communities to find ways to reach out to members to keep them connected.

Take it Online

Are you a member of a knitting club, a local band, or coffee klatch? Help all of your members get onto the same media platform and video chat while you knit, play music, and drink coffee. Zoom, Facetime, Skype and Google Hangout are just a few options for video connection. Not all connected? Most of these platforms offer a call in option, so while you can't see everyone, you can still call in to hear the gossip!

Be a Good Friend, Family Member & Neighbor

Don't offer to do something, just do it. Call your neighbors, friends, and family who are alone over this trying time to just say hello. Making a trip to town? Call and ask what you can pick up for a friend, and drop it off safely on the porch.