



# A GUIDE TO ENHANCING RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT AND FAMILY COMMUNICATION

The negative health effects of social isolation are well-documented. See how well-designed senior living software can help to solve the problem.

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# INTRODUCTION

The negative health effects of social isolation are well-documented. After all, humans are social creatures that rely on community and engagement in order to flourish to the highest possible degree.



Unfortunately, older individuals within our society disproportionately experience social isolation, and this problem only worsened during the global pandemic of 2020. As COVID-19 restrictions and recommendations developed, we were encouraged to keep our distance from our older relatives in order to protect them from contracting the virus. This led to, at best, family “window-side” visits, phone calls, and letters.

These limited forms of interaction have opened our eyes to the great need to allow

for safe, consistent interaction between senior members of our society and their loved ones.

The answer to this issue, as it is to many issues, lies in new technology and software. In this article, we will delve into the issue surrounding a lack of engagement and family communication in the older population. We will then discuss how well-designed senior living software can help to solve the problem.

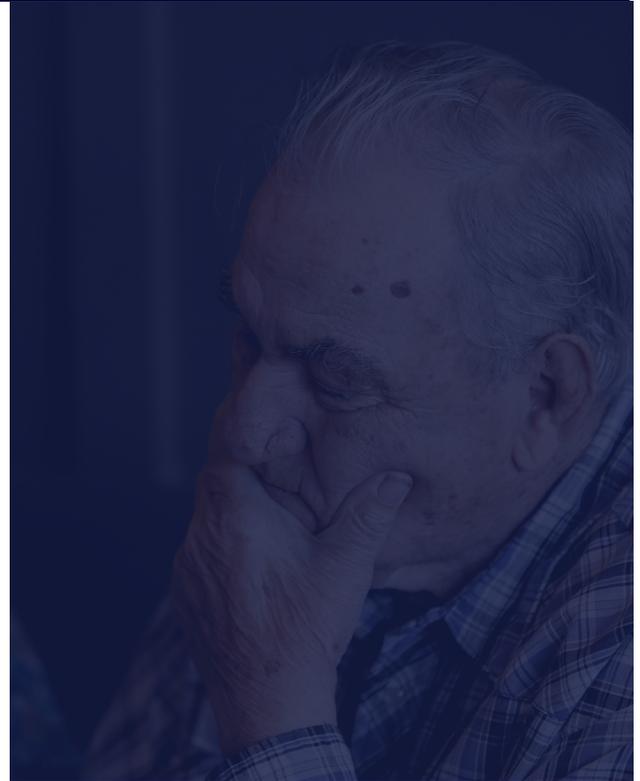
# SOCIAL ISOLATION IN THE OLDER ADULT POPULATION

Social isolation is defined as “an experienced or perceived lack of personal relationships with family, friends, and acquaintances which people can rely on in case of need”. While social isolation can be experienced by anyone of any age, this phenomenon tends to effect older individuals much more frequently.

At first glance, it may not be immediately obvious why the older members of our population tend to experience social isolation more frequently. However, when we think about the life cycle and life events that happen as we age, the reasons become more obvious:

- **Loss of a Spouse;**
- **Retirement;**
- **Loss of Friends and Family;**
- **Physical or Mental Barriers to Participation in Social Activities.**

All of the above items contribute, in part, to the increased incidence of social isolation amongst older individuals.



## PREVALENCE

Not restricted to any age group; however, very prevalent among older adults' population.



# 10-43%

Current estimates of the prevalence of social isolation in community-dwelling older adults indicate that it ranges from 10% to 43%.

# WHAT ARE SOME OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SENIOR LIVING SOFTWARE?

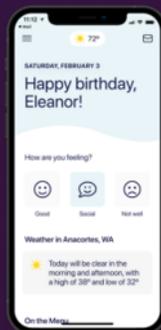
In the “technology age” we have numerous assisted living software options at our disposal. From the very basic means of communication, to more complex ones, assisted living apps are ubiquitous:

- **Social Media:** Facebook, Instagram, and many other popular social media platforms are great ways for older adults to connect with their family and friends.
- **Video Conference Software:** Services like Zoom and GoToMeeting have exploded in popularity over the past few years and have helped millions of people stay connected, even when they can't meet in person.
- **Email/Text Messaging:** Even simple services such as email and text messaging are extremely effective in encouraging communication and engagement.
- **Mobile Apps:** Creates a way for family members to easily and effectively stay informed and engage with their loved ones.

The sky is truly the limit when it comes to senior living software.

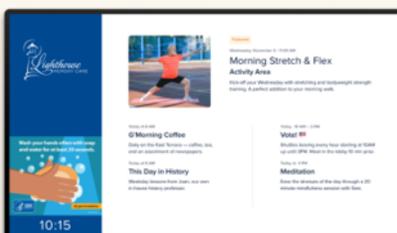
## Apps for family, staff, and residents

The right tool for the right audience – mobile features specific to family, residents, and staff.

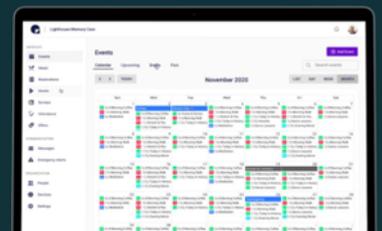


## Share across your residence

Digital signage for common areas and resident rooms via an insertion channel.

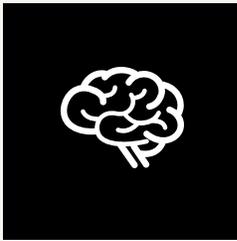


## Schedule Activities, Events, and Meals



# HOW DO SENIOR LIVING APPS BENEFIT OLDER INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETY AT LARGE?

An assisted living app creates a way for older individuals to safely and effectively engage with their loved ones leading to a host of benefits:



## Decreased Risk of Depression and Loneliness.

Research has demonstrated the beneficial mental health effects of increased community and family engagement for older adults. Senior living apps provide these individuals with the ability to connect with family, friends, and community no matter where they are or what their physical and cognitive limitations may be.



## Lower Health Care Costs

Studies on the far-reaching effects of improved engagement in seniors show that the health care system as a whole benefits from implementing methods that encourage communication and connectedness in this population.



## Improved Satisfaction in Older Residents

In assisted living and skilled nursing facilities, resident satisfaction consistently improves with the use of assisted living software. This makes for better client-caregiver interactions and an overall improved experience throughout the length of stay.

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SENIOR LIVING SOFTWARE

As with anything new, we need to thoughtfully consider how best to help our elders and which forms of assisted living software will work best for them. The following questions should be addressed before any new assisted living app is suggested to older individuals:

## Audio/Visual Components

As we age, our senses often start to decline. Most importantly for our purposes: vision and hearing loss are extremely common with those of advanced age. Therefore, any senior living software or app that we suggest and provide to an older person must accommodate the visual and auditory needs of these folks.

## Learning Curve

Many people of working age today grew up with technology. Ask anyone in their twenties if they've ever used a phone book before and they are bound to give you a funny look. But for the older population, technology advances are new and hard to navigate. It's important to ensure that the older individual is trained on the ins and outs of using these senior living apps. Even some of the most basic components of the devices and technology could be completely foreign to them. So, ongoing training and learning opportunities are crucial for success in implementation of assisted living software.

## Physical Demands

Arthritis and other physical maladies tend to increase in prevalence as we age. For this reason, it's important that the technology we recommend for use in this population does not prevent them from using the device due to physical limitations, pain with certain movements, etc. This may necessitate the use of headsets, microphones, or any other piece of equipment that will help these older adults get the most benefit from the technology.

## Device Related Issues

The necessity of charging a device, how to open a senior living app on a computer vs. on a handheld device, and other related technology issues all need to bear consideration when this software is introduced to the older population. You'll want to ensure that when you set up a Zoom meeting for a certain time, the person has charged their device and knows how to troubleshoot common issues as they arise.