

Connecting Champions

Considerations when helping seniors and vulnerable individuals in our community

We would like to thank everyone and express our gratitude to all who take on the challenge of helping our neighbours. As the self-isolation and situation is expected to continue for some time, many of our neighbours, especially seniors could be impacted now or in the coming weeks, especially around access to food.

Please read though the following slides and practice safe support for yourself as well as for those you are supporting.

Please note that if you are providing this support, you are doing it on your own and it is not formally connected to the community centre.

ONGOING INFORMATION

- The situation is in flux and new information and updates are ongoing. The best source for information is to check the Alberta Health Services or Canada Health sites. There is a lot of misinformation on social media, Facebook and Instagram. Please be sure that you are learning the right information from the right sources. This will help to decrease stress and make sure that we are not doing things based on misinformation which can make things worse.
- Many of those you connect with, will ask questions or share things they have heard with you. It can be very difficult for many to know which information is accurate and which is created out of fear and misinformation.
- If you are knowledgeable about information from the proper sources, you can be an important resource for your contact, to give them the proper information that could help to relieve some of the stress they are experiencing.



Personal Safety

-
- **Remember the other precautions from Alberta Health Services:**
 - [Wash your hands often and well](#) (recommendations from AHS are:)
 - wet hands with warm water
 - apply enough soap to cover surfaces of the hands
 - vigorously rub soap over palms, back of hand and wrist
 - include space between fingers, fingertips and thumbs
 - procedure should take 15 to 30 seconds
 - rinse under warm, running water
 - pat hands dry with disposable towel
 - turn tap off with the disposable towel

Personal Safety Continued

- Avoid touching your face, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched
- Be a Hero and stay at home and away from others if you are feeling ill
- Contact your primary health provider or [Health Link 811](#) if you have questions or concerns about your health
- [When sick, cover your cough and sneezes with a sleeve or tissue and then wash your hands.](#)
- Dispose of used tissue in garbage
- If you are sick, wearing a mask helps prevent passing the illness on to other people.
- **If you are healthy, medical masks are not recommended as they don't provide full protection and can create a false sense of security.**

CONNECTING

- Many of the individuals you connect with for the first few weeks, may be okay and not need support right away.
- Some individuals will also still have the support of family members or other friends who are helping.
- Unfortunately the longer this continues, the more likely that individuals will gradually lose support and become even more isolated than they are now.
- Once you connect, even if they do not need help right away, talk about ways you might be able to provide support or help them make other connections using the resources.



COMMUNICATING

- Call your connection at least once a week, just to talk and see how they are doing. Lack of social contact can create greater stress and worry. Having someone to talk to can reduce stress, improve mental health and let them know they are not forgotten. These are very important connections to make to help those who are vulnerable and isolated to know they still have connections.
- When calling your contact to check on them, do not hesitate to have conversations about things not related to the current virus situation. Conversations around other topics can help with reducing stress, and reminding us this is only one moment in time. Ideas for conversations can be found at the end of the slides.
- If the connection asks questions about what they have heard about the virus, do not share information from sites other than Alberta Health Services or Canada Health. Much information from non-official sites, or from Facebook and Instagram are not based on facts and can cause more stress and anxiety. Reassure them with proper information and if you don't know, or what you know doesn't come from a trusted site, "DO NOT SHARE".

COMMUNICATING

- During the conversation or your connection with the individual, you might learn about something that is personal in nature. Please remember that this is private information and should not be shared with others. You can talk about what you do, but not specifically who they are or where they live. This is for their protection from others who might be looking for easy “scores” to take advantage of someone. If you are in public, you don’t know who might be listening.
- If you hear something that is of concern or worries you that they might need more help, contact 311 for the senior connect line.

A photograph of a person's hands holding a smartphone, with a blurred background of an indoor setting. A dark diagonal overlay covers the right side of the image, where the text is located.

COMMUNICATING OVER THE PHONE

- Many of those you connect with will still have phone lines and not cell phones.
- It is important to connect by voice and not by texting, even if they have a cell phone. It may not be easy for them to see the text and while hearing can be a challenge as well, it is easier to have a conversation.
- There are some things to remember when speaking to a senior over the phone, especially if there are challenges for the senior or other individual

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- Using a speaker phone can make it difficult for the person on the other end to hear. Speaker phones can cut out, leaving missing words, making it difficult to piece together what has been said.
- If the person indicated they can't hear you, it can be tempting to raise your voice level (speak louder). If they ask you to speak louder because they can't hear you, raise your voice level slightly and see if that helps. Actual shouting can distort the sound even more and make it that much more difficult for them to understand.
- Sometimes we only need to change the "pitch" of our voice. Think of this as how you might "sing" a higher or lower note. Try to speak in a lower tone and/or a higher tone. This is not speaking louder or softer, but rather changing your voice "tone".

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- Speak as clearly as possible and speak a little slower than you might normally converse. We don't often realize how fast we normally talk and for those with hearing challenges this can make it difficult to follow. If you are not sure you heard them correctly, repeat what you think they said for clarification. "Did you say....?" When you have the grocery list, read it back to them to make sure that you didn't miss something, and it gives them a chance to see if they missed something.
- Be patient. This is a new experience for them as well as you. They may repeat themselves or start talking about something that triggers a memory or thought. Give them some time to share if you can and then bring them 'gently' back to the topic or the list. You can always enjoy longer conversations when you connect with them at another time just to talk.



GROCERIES

- If supporting them by picking up groceries, make sure that the senior will be able to pay for the groceries. Many seniors will still have cheques, and some may be able to E-transfer payment, so if you are concerned about being paid back, please research this with the senior before hand.
- Take their grocery list over the phone. Be sure to ask if there are any food allergies or concerns that you need to be aware when choosing groceries.
- **Medications** can be delivered by Safeway and Shoppers at no charge and the senior can use a credit card over the phone to either location, to pay for the meds, so that they do not need cash when the meds are delivered.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Social Distancing is important for helping to keep everyone safe and decreasing the chance of spreading or contracting the virus. This means staying at least **six feet** from the person you are helping.
- **Social Distancing**
- Social distancing involves taking steps to limit the number of people you come into close contact with. It can help you reduce the risk of getting sick.
- This is not the same as self-isolation. You do not need to remain indoors, but you do need to avoid being in close contact with people.
- To protect yourself and others:
- Keep at least 6 feet (the length of a bicycle) from others when going out for groceries, medical trips and other essential needs
- Limit the number of times you leave your home for errands
- Try to shop at less busy times
- Order online to have groceries or other items delivered if possible
- Go for a walk in your neighborhood or park while maintaining distance from others
- Avoid overcrowding in elevators or other enclosed spaces
- Follow Alberta's recommendations on mass gatherings
- Wash or sanitize your hands after touching communal surfaces

DELIVERING

- Call the contact when you arrive with the groceries and put them outside the door.
- Let them know by phone that the groceries are on the doorstep and wait until they come to the door to bring them in the house.
- If there are mobility challenges, the senior may not be able to come out the door to pick up the groceries, you might need to leave the groceries in the door. Call the senior to let them know you are there, so that they can open the door for you and ask them to move away from the door, so that you can put the groceries inside for them to put away.



CONVERSATION TOPICS

- A special memory
- A favorite activity
- Favorite movie or holiday
- If you could share one specific thing, what would that be?
- What book would you recommend to your friends?
- What are your top 5 favorite movies of all time?
- If you could only eat one thing for the rest of your life, what would it be?
- What song or singer do you love to listen to?
- If money and/or time were no object, what would you want to do? Where would you go? Who would be there? How would you fill your days?
- What do you think the best age to be is? Why?
- When did you know that your spouse was “the one”?

CONVERSATION TOPICS

- How did you choose your children's (or pets') names?
- What's the best advice your parents gave you? Did you listen to it?
- Who do you admire most? Why?
- Who is someone who inspires you? How so?
- At what moment in your life do you remember laughing the hardest?
- What's something in your life that you are really good at? What's something that you wish you were really good at?
- What's something you did that was embarrassing at the time, but you now see the humor in?

CONVERSATION TOPICS

- What was your favorite thing to do as a kid? (What did you save your allowance for? What did you race home after school to do? What did you write, talk, and dream about?)
- What moment in history do you most vividly remember? (Where were you? What were you doing? How were you affected?)
- What are you the most proud of in your life?
- What is the hardest lesson you have ever learned?
- What did you learn in your career that you wish you have known earlier?
- What's your number one piece of life advice?
- What do you hope people remember about you?