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PROMOTING QUALITY OF AGING: Addressing Social Isolation

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ncoa
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Agenda

- Why design matters
- What social isolation is
 - Definitions, causes, & consequences
- How technology can help
 - Aging Mastery® + Breezie
 - LinkedSenior, Connected Communities™, Lyft, & more
- What barriers exist
- How we can do better
- Questions



Learning Objectives

- Discuss the experience of aging and the risk factors that can lead to loneliness in older adults
- Identify technology solutions that can improve social connectedness and engagement
- Demonstrate how organizations are using technology to boost the health and wellness among those they care for



“There are three responses to a piece of design – yes, no, and WOW! Wow is the one to aim for.”

-Milton Glaser

Uninvited Guests, by Superflux Lab

“Older adults are **people first**, not a puzzle to be solved.

It is not until very recently that we’ve begun to think beyond medicalized technologies that beep, buzz, and badger us, to consider **things that may connect** you with a family member or a more extended social network.”

—Joseph Coughlin



Social Isolation and Loneliness

-Distinct, yet intertwined

- **Social isolation** = lack of contact between person and society
- **Loneliness** = subjective feeling of isolation, not belonging, or lacking companionship

17-30%

- feel lonely at
- least some of
- the time

2-16%

- 65+ feel
- severely
- lonely

32%

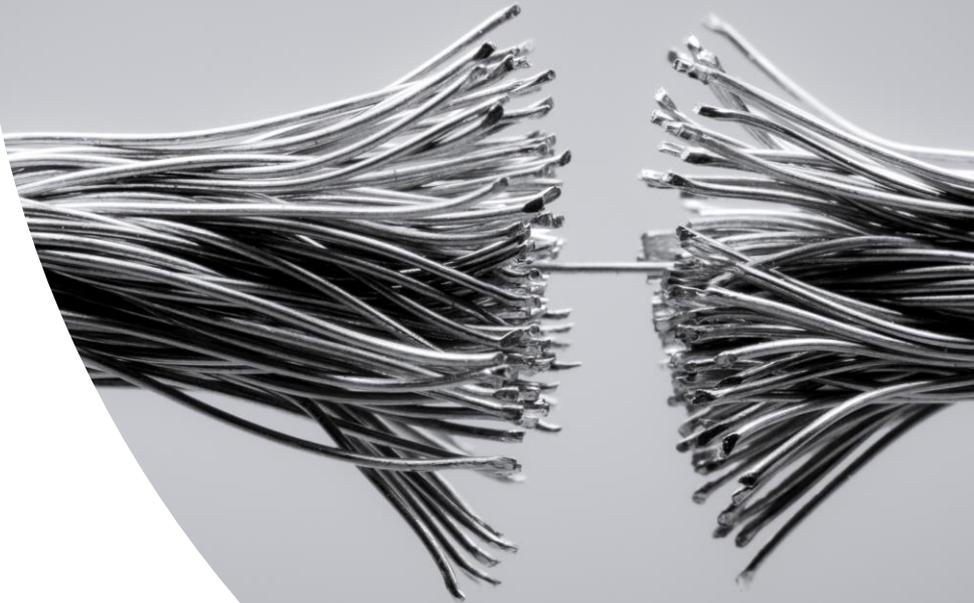
- 55+ feel lonely at a given point in time

Increased risk =
low income,
caregivers,
rural, &
LGBTQ



Causes

- Lack of social, familial, and work connections
- Health issues
 - Hearing/sight loss
 - Mobility loss
 - Mental health
 - Chronic conditions
- Financial instability
- Geographic distance
- Poor transportation options



Consequences

- Lower immune function
- Higher blood pressure
- Less sleep
- Increased risk of hospitalization
- Depression/mental health concerns
- Earlier onset of dementia

Health risks of prolonged isolation = smoking 15 cigarettes/day.

Social isolation and loneliness have serious financial costs. Medicare spends an estimated \$6.7 billion in additional spending each year on socially isolated older adults. -AARP



How Can Technology Help?

- Reengagement with the world
- Renewed sense of purpose and relevancy
- Rejuvenation: mind, body, and soul

Imagining a future self

Aging Mastery®



Aging Mastery + Breezie

225 older adults receive
Samsung tablet computers
with wireless access

A collaboration with:

- Breezie
- NCOA
- Senior Centers (7)
- Columbia Aging Center



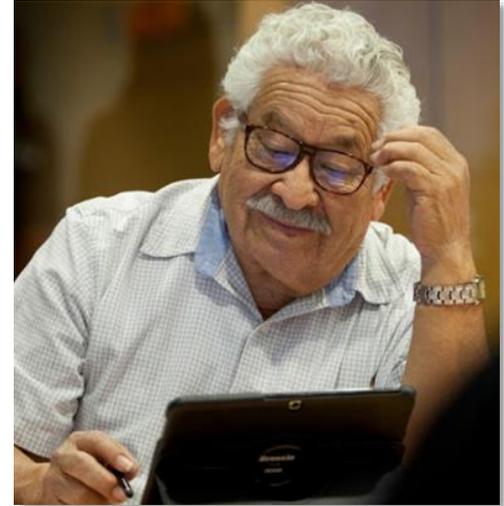
Breezie:Technology (and more!)

- Aging Mastery content and prompts
- Consolidated address book for easy connectivity
- Clean design
- Customization
- Analytics tools
- Help desk
- Survey delivery



NCOA: Content and Support

- Tablet set-up and training
 - ▶ One-on-one training with site coaches
 - ▶ User guides; step-by-step instructions
- Curated content and activities
 - ▶ Aging Mastery digital “to-do” list
 - ▶ Aging Mastery portal/resource library
 - ▶ Ad-hoc guides
 - ▶ “AMP Up Your Week” push notifications



Senior Centers: Implementation

- Participant recruitment
 - ▶ No previous experience online
 - ▶ Underserved (income, gender, age, ethnicity, and/or geography)
- Age-appropriate training
- Ongoing peer support and classes
- Aging Mastery Program® classes



Columbia Aging Center: Assessing Impact

- 3-part evaluation with extensive phone surveys

1. Assessments

- Physical health, cognitive health, and advance care planning
- Social engagement, well-being, and civic engagement
- Technology

2. Analytics

- Precise metrics including time online and sites visited

3. Demographics



Outcomes

- **Frequency of Social Interactions** increased by 2.3 points on a 30-point scale and was maintained.
- **Frequency of Contact** increased gradually, corresponding to a shift from “several times a week” towards “once a day”.
- **Civic Engagement** increased, then decreased, then increased again for overall increase.
- **Self-Esteem** increased by 1.6 points on 15-point scale between Q0 and Q1, $p < .001$ and was maintained.
- **Mental Well-Being** showed overall significant improvements between baseline and the completion of the program.



Outcomes, cont.

- **Technology Use** showed significant improvement.
 - **Physical Activity** increased significantly and was maintained.
 - **Medical Planning** resulted in overall improvement and completion of advance care plans.
 - **Lifelong learning** increased significantly and was maintained.
-

Even though I am disabled and am at home most of the time, this class has given me a means to be connected with the "outside world".



Gail's Story

Breezie | *Gail's story*



Catherine's Story

Breezie
Catherine's story



Sense of Wellbeing

Before



After



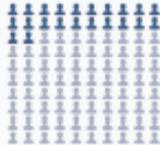
After using Breezie for 3 months

83%

of users say they have an overall sense of wellbeing compared with 39% before.

Social Interaction

Before



After



After using Breezie for 3 months

72%

of users say they receive as much social interaction as they would like compared with 22% before.

Accessing Healthcare Information

Before



After



After using Breezie for 3 months

67%

of users say they find it easy to access healthcare information compared with 28% before.

Accessing Local Services

Before



After



After using Breezie for 3 months

73%

of users say they find it easy to access local services compared with 18% before.

Ongoing Breezie Impact

LinkedSenior

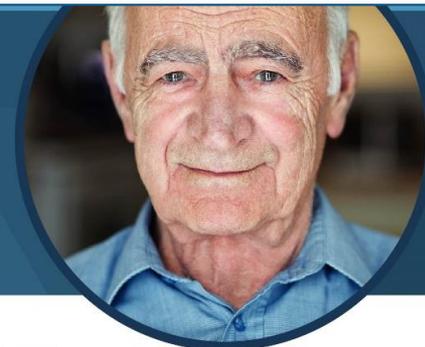
A collaboration to address loneliness, helplessness, and boredom with:

- Center for Aging and Brain Health Innovation (CABHI)
- Baycrest
- Responsive Group, Inc
- Western Oregon University



RESEARCH STUDY

Igniting Purpose for Older Adults through Engagement and Technology Support



THE STUDY.

Linked Senior partnered with Responsive Group in Toronto and Western Oregon University to research resident engagement with funding from the Baycrest-led Centre for Aging + Brain Health Innovation (CABHI). Over the past year, residents from the 3 RHM long-term care and memory care communities were grouped as (1) Low-Engagement Residents versus (2) High-Engagement Residents.



THE RESULTS.

Being highly engaged in recreational activity is associated with increased cognitive functioning and social engagement, as well as decreased aggression and antipsychotic medication use. The data is based on a total sample size of 185 residents (Low Engagement = 75, High Engagement = 110).



↓ **20%**

decrease in antipsychotic medication use



↓ **18%**

decrease in aggressive behaviors



↑ **20%**

increase in social engagement



↑ **3%**

increase in cognitive functioning

Connected Communities™

- Shared journey of learning
- Access to information, resources, and events
- Empowerment/independence



connect **2** affect
Powered by AARP Foundation

Social check-in survey assesses risk for isolation on regular basis and offers tips for staying connected.



Ridesharing

NCOA, Lyft, and Senior Center Pilot

- Transportation to/from senior centers for activities
- Education and awareness + coupons
- Funding via Medicare/Medicaid transportation dollars?

GoGoGrandparent

- On-demand transportation using any type of phone

Studies show that increased participation in evidence-based programs can reduce social isolation.

Drawings for My Grandchildren

- Renewed sense of purpose
- Renewed connections via curiosity and creativity
- Participation in digital culture



My dad's daily job was to drive his grandkids to school.



Then one day, my sister and her husband decided to move back to Korea.



Suddenly, my dad was eager to draw again and learn Instagram.

Reconnecting Lives

- Autonomous vehicles
- Food/grocery delivery
- Homesharing (*Silvernest, Airbnb*)
- Hearables (*Livio™ AI*)
- Low-vision headsets (*Iris Vision*)
- VR (*Embodied Labs, Rendeever*)
- Social communities (*linkAges, Silverline, Klaatch, Stitch*)
- Voice-first caregiving (*LifePod*)



Barriers

- Affordability
- Accessibility
- Accountability



I'm Still Me

**My hair has turned gray
I don't move the same way
and I can't eat anything fried;
My hearing has failed
My complexion has paled
But I'm still me inside.**

–Shirley (87),
Aging Mastery/Breezie participant





National Council on Aging

Questions

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