

# Positive 'resilience factors' can help older adults mitigate negative effects of loneliness, study finds

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"Resilience factors," such as engaging in more activities, expanding one's social network, and increasing the use of technology, can lower the risk of loneliness among the elderly, new research finds.

These "resilience factors" help decrease the negative physical and [mental health](#) consequences that are associated with [loneliness](#), said lead author Julianna Liu, Medical Student Training in Aging Research Scholar, Aging Brain Center, Hinda and Arthur Marcus Institute for Aging Research, Hebrew SeniorLife. The research is published in *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*.

These actions can be accomplished through strategies such as involvement at senior centers, participating in volunteer activities, and increasing access to and knowledge of modern technological devices that allow for virtual social connection, Liu said. These actions are practical ways to decrease the detrimental effects of loneliness, she said.

At the same time researchers found that several risk factors increased one's likelihood of experiencing loneliness: [older age](#), inability to complete daily activities, vision impairment, depression, and anxiety. Loneliness, a feeling of distress or discomfort in response to perceived isolation, is common among older adults, particularly during periods of social isolation. It can be associated with poor health outcomes, and is therefore an important topic to talk about and prevent if possible.

Researchers used data collected both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic from participants of the Successful Aging after Elective Surgery (SAGES) study during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown. Participants in the SAGES study have been completing interviews with Hebrew SeniorLife for approximately 10 years; therefore, Hebrew SeniorLife already had a robust dataset with many variables assessing cognition and functioning that were utilized for this COVID-related study.

"This study found several [risk factors](#) that increased the chance of experiencing loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown," Liu said.

"Importantly, it also identified actionable 'resilience factors' that helped mitigate some negative effects of loneliness on physical and mental health outcomes," said Dr. Tamara G. Fong, co-senior author and mentor.

**More information:** Julianna Liu et al, Association of Loneliness With Change in Physical and Emotional Health of Older Adults During the COVID-19 Shutdown, *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jagp.2023.07.015](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jagp.2023.07.015)

Provided by Hebrew SeniorLife Hinda and Arthur Marcus Institute for Aging Research

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