



## Older Adults - Coping with Loss of Time

Lockdown and social distancing means that a lot more time is spent at home, with fewer opportunities to engage in activities and connect with other people outside of our homes. If you are an older adult who tends to be at higher risk, it is understandable how stressful these times are, and how difficult it might be to cope with a sense of loss of valuable time.

This guide provides some information on coping with these feelings, as well as practical tips for making use of your time at home and connecting with others in a way that feels most important to you.

### Coping with Feelings of Loss

Experiencing a loss of time as an older adult can be difficult especially if it feels like you are moving towards the end of your life. It is only natural to feel all kinds of unexpected emotions in reaction to this loss, including anger or sadness. It is important to acknowledge that loss is personal to you, and such a response to what you are facing is natural.

However, there are healthy ways to cope and find acceptance. It is also possible to find meaning in possible alternatives to spending your time.

### A) Taking Care of Your Well-Being

Taking care of your mental and physical well-being can help cope with feelings of loss, and is also a way to engage in meaningful activities.

#### 1. Maintaining a Basic Routine

- Try to maintain a regular daily routine as much as you can. Having a regular meal and sleep schedule can do wonders in helping you keep mentally and physically healthy.
- Make sure you are also getting enough sleep; 7-9 hours is a good amount to aim for to keep well-rested and energised for the day ahead.
- If you are taking medication, make sure you are still taking them at times of the day according to advice from your GP.



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## 2. Staying Connected

- There are many ways to remain connected and spend quality with people and loved ones during this time. Try phoning a family member or friend for regular chats. When possible, agree on a day and time to call again. Scheduling a fixed time to chat about how you're feeling can be helpful. If you have access to a computer or smartphone, you can try video calling to contact people each week.
- Doing activities together over the phone or video call, such as catching a movie on TV, can be another way to spend quality time with loved ones.
- There are also online communities you can join to connect with others:
  - [Silversurfers](#) is an online community for over 50s in the UK, providing information, forums, and chat rooms to connect with others in the community.
  - [Sixtyplussurfers](#) is another online community providing information and news relevant to older adults. They have their own Facebook page as well as a [Chat and Socialise](#) forum to connect with other older adults.
  - Alternatively, many online communities exist online for specific hobbies or interests.

## 3. Staying Active

- There are many ways to stay active in lockdown. Here are some exercises you can try in the comfort of your own home:
  - NHS has come up with some **age-friendly exercises** for older adults around [strength](#), [sitting](#), and [balance](#).
  - **Live exercise sessions** are also an amazing opportunity to connect with others. Exercise company **Move it or Lose It** is offering exercises catered for older adults on their Facebook page. They schedule regular workouts on weekday afternoons at 2.30pm. Click on [this link](#) to find out more.



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## B) Engaging in Valued Activities

There are many ways to still engage in other meaningful activities at home as alternatives to spending time outside, aside from the tips mentioned above. One way to come up with such activities is to first **get in touch with your values**.

### 1. Getting in touch with your values

Our values are like a compass. They are at the heart of meaning and purpose in our lives, and help **guide and define what's most important to us**. Not only can our values help us cope in difficult times, but also help us find **activities to engage in that bring us the most meaning**.

Here are some common broad categories of values. What are the values that matter most to you?

- Relationships (Family, marriage, friends)
- Work/Education/Learning
- Recreation/Leisure
- Spirituality/Religion
- Physical Health (nutrition, exercise)
- Community

### 2. Finding activities in line with your values

After identifying your values, try coming up with activities that meet your values. For example, if relationships and keeping connected with family and friends are a priority for you, one way to do so is by engaging in shared activities, be it over the phone/video call or in person. If you value keeping physically healthy, you can try some age-friendly exercises such as the ones suggested above.

Here are some suggestions. **Pick a few that you think would be most meaningful to you based on your values** (Or, just pick some that you think you'd enjoy spending time on!). These activities can fall under any of your values:



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- Catch a movie/show
- Do a home exercise
- Knitting
- Cooking (try a new recipe!)
- Read a book
- Drawing or Painting
- Colouring
- Origami
- Do a puzzle
- Call family or friends
- Swap Stories
- Take and share photos
- Draw comfort from your faith
- Connect with others on social media
- Join an online community
- Meditation
- Listen to Music
- Play a musical instrument
- Take a short walk where possible
- Writing/Journaling
- Singing
- Dancing
- Play a board/card game
- Take an online class

### 3. Resources and activities you can do online

If you don't have access to some of these activities at home, it is possible to engage in some of them online. **Ask a friend, family member, or carer for help** in setting up some of these activities if you are not as familiar with technology. There is also information further down the document on keeping up with digital skills.

Here are some links you can click on, in blue:

- Online [jigsaw puzzles](#)
- **Singing for Health** has [YouTube videos](#) designed to support people who want to improve and maintain their health through singing
- **National Theatre** [livestreams](#) shows every Thursday at 7pm
- See nature across the world from online with live cameras: [nature live streams](#).
- Take a virtual tour of museums online, like the [British Museum](#).
- **Free online classes:** **Age UK** offers information on free online classes for older adults [here](#).



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List a few activities you would like to engage in and incorporate into your routine. They need not be from the list above:

Note that it is also good to be mindful of putting too much pressure on yourself to make the most use of your time. Try not to tire yourself out by scheduling too many activities, and make sure you are getting plenty of rest and still maintaining your self-care.

#### 4. Keeping up with Digital Skills

- **Age UK** [offers advice](#) about using technology and the Internet, including the use of video calls and digital terms.
- They also have more information on [getting online](#) and helping elder family members get online, using Skype, setting up e-mail, social media, or watching TV online.

### C) **Practicalities: Planning Towards The End of Your Life**

It can be difficult to discuss end-of-life plans, and this can prove even more challenging under the current circumstances. This can lead to added stress and pressure in the context of facing a loss of time. If you find yourself thinking about end-of-life planning, but having difficulty discussing such plans, here is some general advice and information that might be helpful.

- **Talk to friends and family.** It can be helpful for loved ones to know about your wishes. Arrange a phone call and let them know ahead of time what you would like to discuss. Try to pick a day and time where you can speak without being rushed or interrupted. Think about jotting down what you would like to discuss beforehand.



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- **Contact your GP.** If you have any health conditions or illnesses, clarify any questions and concerns that you or your family might have. It might be useful to talk about what to expect, treatment options, and what support is available.
- Once speaking to your loved ones, you can consider further planning to best meet your preferences. This may include other more **formal or legal procedures**. You can find more information on the processes online, such as on making a will, financial support, and power of attorney [here](#). Although face-to-face services may no longer be available, you can still seek legal advice over the phone or online.

## Further Support and Information

- If you need further support, **Age UK** offers a free, confidential advice line for older adults and their families, friends, or carers. They can be contacted at **0800 678 1602** from 8am-7pm everyday.
- **The Silver Line** offers a free, confidential helpline for older adults who are seeking information, friendship, advice, and even protection from abuse. They are available 24-hours and can be reached at **0800 4708 090**.
- If you need support coping with grief or bereavement, you can contact the **Cruse Bereavement Care** at **0808 808 1677** (Mon & Fri 9.30-5pm; Tues, Wed, Thurs 9.30-8pm)

## References

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/>

<http://www.careengland.org.uk/sites/careengland/files/Maintaining%20Activities%20for%20Older%20Adults%20during%20COVID19.pdf>