

Using Technology to Reduce Isolation and Ease Caregiving

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- By [Cindy Vondenkamp](#) October 29, 2018
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My mom, at 91, can be described as ornery, full of faith and still an adventurer at heart. She's outlived three husbands and believes that "serial monogamy" is a good idea. With such independence of spirit, I could never imagine her not being self-sufficient.

Most of us plan, plan, plan. We plan for weddings, vacations, our children, college, reunions, celebrations, careers and funerals. I was surprised to find that many older adults find it somewhat easy to plan for a funeral but avoid planning for a physical or cognitive decline situation, should it occur.

My siblings and I needlessly stumbled stressfully through each stage of our parents aging as increasing need became more apparent. Being reactionary was not the best approach. Being narrowly focused on only just financials wasn't either. Well-rounded thriving at all ages

includes many dimensions like physical, intellectual, spiritual and social engagement needs too. In retrospect, looking around corners in advance would have been a better idea for us all. Here are some resource tools that can help:

1. Know the signs and be prepared. Adults are prideful about their independence. Be proactive and alert to the signs that your parent needs help.

2. Access the wealth of resources and tools available. These will help your family prepare for the time when parents may need your help. See AgingCare's [Creating a Care Plan](#) guide as well as Next Avenue's [caregiving resources](#).

3. Realize that social connectedness to family and friends is nonnegotiable.

Social isolation especially for older adults accelerates decline. You can be lonely and alone in your own home and in an active senior community, too. Seek out technologies to assist in fulfilling a healthy balance for your parents, facilitating their care and maintaining your own well-being.

We keep my mom connected to her friends and family through her in-room [LifeShare](#). Because LifeShare works on any TV, it was rewarding to witness her sense of pride and accomplishment when she realized she could navigate through games, faith programming, emails and more. She loves getting pictures from family and friends that scroll slideshow style on her TV. With all the activity choices in her LifeShare, we have more to do and more to talk about on those days she may not feel like leaving her apartment.

Best of all we can see what's happening in her community from our LifeShare mobile app. We can see the community calendar, important announcements and download any pictures of mom that staff may take. We coordinate her appointments and scheduling, send her automated reminders to take medications, meet us in the lobby for an outing and more. As a family, we stay updated and have one clear communication place for mom, confidentially between caregivers about mom, and for us, too. The LifeShare platform keeps us more engaged in not only her day to day life but more connected to staff as well.

I now realize what a privilege it is to serve our loved ones as they travel this part of their journey. While some resistance to caregiving came initially, honor to participate came finally.

By [Cindy Vondenkamp](#)

Cindy Vondenkamp is an account executive for LifeShare Technologies. She has worked in a consultative sales capacity for over 25 years. Her dedicated passion and work for helping those that care for older adults began in 2009. She joined the LifeShare team in early 2017.



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