

Mental Health

Social Connections A Resource for Caregivers



Asian American Health Initiative
Montgomery County
Department of Health and Human Services



Maya recently moved in with her daughter, Sara. The adjustment to a new environment has been more difficult than she imagined. Maya used to be outgoing and active but lately, she has not been her usual self. Maya has become more quiet and has started to get frequent headaches. One day, Sara returns home from work and finds Maya staring out the window.



You have a bad knee mom, it's okay. You should not stand for too long. Why don't you sit down and watch TV until dinner is ready?

I have been doing that all day! I'm so tired of sitting down. Plus, they speak so fast, I have a hard time understanding the TV. But, what can I do if she does not need my help?




Okay...

Mom, you are barely eating anything! You are getting so frail and look so weak these days. You should eat.



I am not feeling too hungry today... Back home, I used to eat fresh fruits and vegetables from my own garden! The food here has no taste.



Your blood pressure has been high these days, so I did not put as much salt, maybe that is why it tastes different?

No, it's not the salt... It's just— I miss the food I used to eat.

Maybe next time we can go to the Asian market and you can find some of the vegetables you like.

I wish I could go to the grocery store and go outside without depending on anyone. I am just a burden on Sara!

Will you be able to take me on Saturday?

Mason has a soccer game on Saturday. How about next weekend?


Like many weekends, Sara was busy running errands and Maya stayed home alone.



Did you know?


Spending more time connecting to the community through volunteering, attending religious services, participating in club activities, and exploring personal hobbies is found to be related to lower levels of loneliness.

Source: AARP Foundation



Mom? I am home. Is everything okay?
Why are you sitting in the dark?


Hi Sara. I'm alright. I just have
a headache and thought I
would take a nap.




Oh... what did you do today? Were
you able to take a shower? Should I
check your blood pressure?

My blood pressure is fine! Can you just set up
the video call with your Aunt Kim for me? No
one has been around to set up the video call
and I haven't talked to her in days.

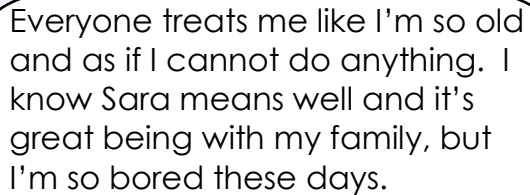
Sara helped Maya video call Aunt Kim. Walking by Maya's room, Sara overhears her mom talking to her aunt.



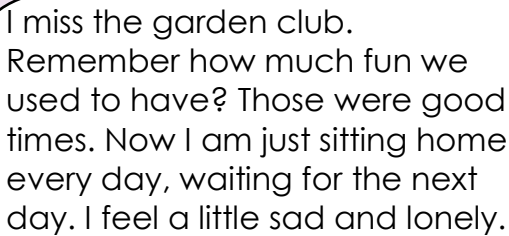
Kim, it's been so long. How are you? How is everyone at home?



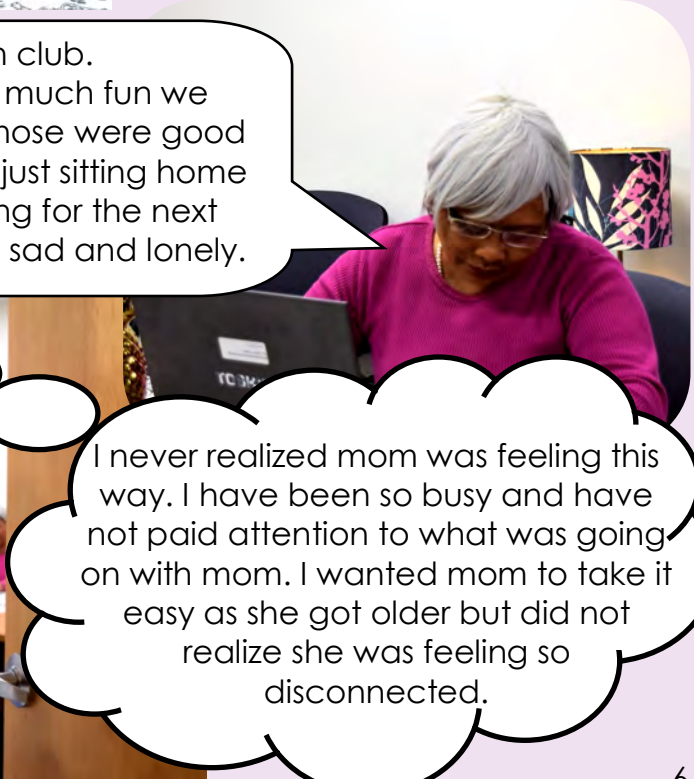

It's hard for me to get anywhere by myself. The bus system is confusing, and I am not able to drive here.



Everyone treats me like I'm so old and as if I cannot do anything. I know Sara means well and it's great being with my family, but I'm so bored these days.



I miss the garden club. Remember how much fun we used to have? Those were good times. Now I am just sitting home every day, waiting for the next day. I feel a little sad and lonely.



I never realized mom was feeling this way. I have been so busy and have not paid attention to what was going on with mom. I wanted mom to take it easy as she got older but did not realize she was feeling so disconnected.

Sara felt a little helpless and confused. The next day Sara decided to look online for resources to help her and her mom. She saw that the local senior center was hosting a workshop on caregiving. Sara decided to attend the workshop and see if they could help her.

Hi there! Thanks for the very informative talk on caregiving. I learned a lot. My mom moved to the US a few years ago and recently moved in with me. I overheard her saying she was very sad and lonely. I am not sure how to best help her?



I am so sorry to hear that. Unfortunately, loneliness and social isolation is very common among older adults and it can impact both physical health and mental health.

Social isolation and loneliness? Can you tell me a little bit more about it?

Did you know?

Signs that a person might be isolated

- Deep boredom, general lack of interest and withdrawal
- Losing interest in personal hygiene
- Poor eating and nutrition
- Significant disrepair, clutter, and hoarding in the home

Source: AARP Foundation

Adjusting to a new family dynamic is challenging for many older adults. When older adults move to a new place, especially a new country, they are unable to contribute to their community in the same ways they are used to.



Without a sense of purpose they used to have, combined with a new culture, language barrier, and often limited mobility, social isolation, and loneliness start to grow.

That makes a lot of sense. What can I do to help her and improve this situation?


There are many resources that can help you and your mom, such as senior centers and transportation programs. It is important that you let your mom drive this process. Ask her what she needs and see how you can support her.




That sounds like a great place to start the conversation with my mom. Thank you so much for these resources.

After reading through the resources, and realizing her role as a caregiver, Sara approaches her mom the next evening.


Hi mom, I know the transition to the new place has not been easy for you. I have been so busy and you have not been able to get out of the house much. I want you to be happy while you are here. What can I do to make this change easy for you?



Oh, Sara! I know you are doing everything you can to make it comfortable for me. I just– I am stuck home all day with nowhere to go. I miss doing the things I used to do. I miss meeting people and just being able to talk and connect.




I had no idea you were feeling this way, mom. Let's talk about what may help you to feel more connected and independent. I have learned about a senior center close by, maybe we could visit it.



I know you feel a little uncomfortable because English is not your first language, but you have my support. How about we see if you like the senior center. It could be a good way to meet people.

That is a great idea mom! Also, I have a surprise for you! I got you a tablet! You can use it to make video calls and connect with your friends and Aunt Kim back home.

Sure, I guess I can try it out. I also want to get back into gardening. Maybe we can go and get some gardening supplies this weekend?



Mason will set it up this weekend and is going to teach you how to use it. You will be an expert in no time!

Thank you, Sara. This sounds great. It will really help me connect with my friends.

Did you know?

Caregiver is a term used to describe individuals that provide support to another person in need. It could be a family member, relative, neighbor, a respite caregiver or a paid professional.

For a few months, Mason took Maya to the senior center every week. At the senior center, Maya learned how to use the bus system and started going to the center by herself. She also took a knitting class and made some new friends. Her busy schedule and daily routine gave her a sense of purpose and greatly improved her mood.



It is nice out...maybe I will try walking to the center today!



My friends have such a great sense of humor!



Need to pick tomatoes from the garden for dinner tonight!



It is so good to be able to watch old movies!

With everyday, Maya's confidence to engage in new activities and learn new skills continues to build. Next week, she is planning to teach a workshop on gardening at the senior center!

UNDERSTANDING LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

Causes	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Lack of knowledge about available resources ◆ Transportation barriers ◆ Loss of community network ◆ Limited financial resources ◆ Physical disability ◆ Language and cultural barrier ◆ Limited mobility ◆ Change in role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Complains of aches, pains, and headaches ◆ High blood pressure ◆ Greater risk of heart disease ◆ Increased vulnerability ◆ Poor cognitive performance ◆ Early onset of dementia ◆ Depression ◆ Suicidal ideation

Source: AARP Foundation

HOW TO STAY CONNECTED AND ENGAGED



Source: National Institute on Aging; Administration on Aging

MONTGOMERY COUNTY RESOURCES

Aging and Disability Resource Unit



240-777-3000

Provides information and resources for seniors and/or people with disabilities and their caretakers/home aids, including:

- Support for family caregivers
- Financial assistance
- Senior Care Subsidy Program
- Transportation
- Housing
- In-home care
- Adult Protective Services

Villages in Montgomery County



240-777-1231

Local, volunteer-led, grassroots organizations that aim to support the community who chose to age-in-place. They foster social connections through activities and events and coordinate volunteer help at home using neighbor helping neighbor model.
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/ADS/Villages/Villagesindex.html

Recreational/Volunteering

Montgomery County 50+ Volunteer Network: 240-777-2600

The program matches skilled volunteers with nonprofit and government agencies needing assistance.

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/volunteercenter/nonprofits-gov/50plus-Orgs.html

Montgomery County Senior Calendar:

Provides a list of local events, activities, and workshops such as computer tutoring classes, English conversation classes, free Tai Chi classes and more.

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/senior/calendar.html

Senior Recreation Programs: 240-777-6840

Provides information on various facilities, recreation centers and aquatic centers in Montgomery County. Also provides information on senior membership passes and group classes.



Montgomery County Senior Centers



240-777-4925

Provides a wide range of programs, services, and activities such as fitness & dance classes, educational seminars, health & wellness programs, travel & volunteer opportunities, individual & team sports, a weekday lunch program, a wide variety of drop-in programs, lectures, seminars and more.

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/rec/facilities/seniorcenters/

<p>Damascus</p> <p>240-777-6995 9701 Main Street Damascus, MD 20872 Monday-Friday: 9:00am-4:00pm Saturday-Sunday: CLOSED</p>	<p>Holiday Park</p> <p>240-777-4999 3950 Ferrara Drive Silver Spring, MD 20906 Monday-Friday: 9:00am-4:00pm Saturday-Sunday: CLOSED</p>
<p>Long Branch</p> <p>240-777-6975 8700 Piney Branch Road Silver Spring, MD 20901 Monday-Friday: 9:00am-2:30pm Saturday-Sunday: CLOSED</p>	<p>Margaret Schweinhaut</p> <p>240-777-8085 1000 Forest Glen Road Silver Spring, MD 20901 Monday-Friday: 8:15am-4:00pm Saturday: 9:00am-3:00pm Sunday: CLOSED</p>
<p>North Potomac</p> <p>240-773-4805 13850 Travilah Road Rockville, MD 20850 Monday-Friday: 9:00am-3:00pm Saturday-Sunday: CLOSED</p>	<p>White Oak</p> <p>240-777-6944 1700 April Lane Silver Spring, MD 20904 Monday-Friday: 9:00am-3:00pm Saturday-Sunday: CLOSED</p>

Transportation Services for Seniors & Persons with Disability

Montgomery County Older Adult Transportation Options:

Provides convenient travel information on free and discounted transportation options for older adults **50+**.

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/senior/transportation.html



Senior Transportation Resources at a Glance



Ride-On



240-777-0311

Seniors **65+** ride **FREE** with valid Senior SmarTrip Card or Medicare card with photo ID.

Connect-A-Ride



301-738-3252

Free information & referral services. Helps adults **50+** find transportation for medical services, social activities and more.

Senior Connection



301-962-0820

Provides **FREE** escorted transportation services to seniors **60+** through a growing network of volunteers.

OTHER RESOURCES

AARP Caregiving Resources: 1-877-333-5885

Provides information caregiving, tips on how to manage stress, burnout and more. www.aarp.org/caregiving

Eldercare Locator: 1-800-677-1116

Provides service that connects older adult and their caregivers to transportation, home care, caregiver needs training and more.

There are linguistically and culturally sensitive mental health providers available to the Asian American community. For more information, please contact the **Asian American Health Initiative** at **240-777-4517**.

For more information on local resources for Asian American older adults in Montgomery County, please contact the Asian American Health Initiative at **240-777-4517**.

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Disclaimer: The characters, places, and incidents depicted in this photonovel are fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons or events is entirely coincidental.

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Asian American
Health Initiative

Together To Build A Healthy Community



Asian American Health Initiative

Montgomery County

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