



# angels grace

## HOSPICE

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## Health Benefits of Social Interaction

If you are elderly and living alone, or a time-constrained caregiver for someone with a serious illness, you may find yourself removed from day-to-day interactions with others, leaving you feeling especially secluded and lonely.

“People who are chronically lacking in social contacts are more likely to experience elevated levels of stress,” according to an article in *The New York Times*.

New findings from a large insurance company show that nearly 31% of Americans over the age of 65 don’t feel socially engaged. “Social isolation and loneliness can often impact health as much as physical attributes,” says Dr. Meredith Williams, medical director at Humana.

### Overcoming Loneliness

Balance for mind, body, and spirit are needed to maintain quality of life, and research has found that “adults who are more socially connected are healthier and live longer.” Socialization can improve well-being in a number of important ways: reduced anxiety, stress, and risk of depression; more regular physical activity, energy, and mental stimulation; greater self-esteem and extended lifespan.

“Healthy aging is a group activity,” Dr. Williams points out, and regardless of physical ailments, transportation challenges, being without a mate, or round-the-clock chores, it’s fortunately never too late to pursue an active social life.

### Reaching Out

Comprehensive life enrichment programs often address five dimensions of wellness — emotional, social, spiritual, physical, and educational. While focusing on all these aspects of your life might seem like an impossible luxury, it really is a necessity. We must eat to live, so why not have a meal with a friend?

Don’t underestimate the importance of incorporating fun in your life. Sharing a good laugh draws people together and can truly be the best medicine. Take the time to look for opportunities where relationships can form. Start your personal journey of satisfaction, enrichment, and longevity.



### Social Engagement Suggestions

1. Build positive, ongoing relationships with family, especially the younger generations.
2. Do volunteer work; strive to be part of something bigger than yourself.
3. Connect with community resources, such as a senior center, park district, or religious organization.
4. Plan activities on your own — such as card games or book discussions — and include others who might be lonely.
5. Find a sense of purpose; care for a pet or pursue a hobby or sport.

## Helpful Ideas for Caregivers

### Making a Home Safe for an Elderly Loved One

Keeping loved ones safe at home, especially taking precautions that can prevent falls, can be challenging. Here are some tips from home care providers that identify common causes of hazards, and when addressed, can make living at home much more pleasant and safe:

- Remove throw rugs, or use double-sided tape or a rug pad to secure them to the floor.
- Suggest comfortable shoes that fit well or socks with a non-skid sole, or change flooring to one with a less slippery surface.
- Place nightlights in dark rooms, hallways, and bathrooms.
- Switch to lever handles instead of doorknobs.
- Downsize clutter and unneeded/low furniture.
- Check that the height of the bed and all seating, including the toilet, suits your loved one.
- Install or stabilize railings, especially along stairs and in hallways.
- Add grab bars near the shower/tub and toilet, and add a rubber mat or adhesive non-stick decals to the bottom of the tub.
- Run electrical cords behind furnishings.
- Add a “clapper” light switch to control lamps, and use the highest wattage bulb recommended for each socket.
- Move frequently used kitchen items within easy reach, and store dangerous utensils in a safe place.
- Paint the bottom step a different color to distinguish it from the floor.
- Make sure outdoor lighting is functional.
- Consider using an emergency alert system.

### Capturing Loved Ones’ Life Stories

The holidays are a perfect time to arrange a generous and meaningful gift — interviewing a loved one about their life, or documenting your own history to share with future generations. It’s a great way to remember all we have achieved and to leave a legacy to be enjoyed for years to come.

According to FamilySearch, human beings desire belonging and connections. “Knowing our cultural background and where we came from can help us develop a strong sense of who we really are. Stories remind us that surely not everything in life will work easily, that disappointments occur and inequalities exist, but that we can recover, triumph, and find happiness despite hardships.”

It’s not whether a story is pleasant,

grammatically correct, or complete that matters, but rather that a hidden treasure is shared. Here are some tips to inspire your family’s interviewing and writing efforts:

- Tell your favorite stories aloud.
- Share as many details as possible.
- Trigger memories with photos, clothing, maps, and calendars, a family tree, etc.
- Leave time for the memories to flow, and revisit your files to update facts.
- Record your stories in various ways — handwritten in a journal, on notecards, as recipes, or in a scrapbook; in audio/video recordings using a computer or phone; in photos or even a memory shelf or quilt.

For more writing inspiration, search online for weekly questions offered by #52Stories or StoryCorps’s lists of helpful questions.



Some people mistakenly think hospice care is just about dying...nothing could be further from the truth. Hospice helps patients and families focus on living. Angels Grace Hospice, LLC, brings comfort, dignity and peace to help people with a life-limiting illness live every moment of life to the fullest. We also provide support for family and friends.

We are licensed in the state of Illinois, Medicare Certified, Joint Commission Accredited and are locally owned and operated by experienced professionals dedicated to providing excellent end-of-life care for Will, Cook, DuPage, Kendall, Grundy, and Kane counties. Please contact us for more information.

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*To comfort always... this is our work*

