Social Isolation and Loneliness Resources Guide

Easy Ways to Build Connections

Why a “Happy to Chat” bench in YOUR community?

“The chat bench removes that invisible social barrier that prevents people from saying ‘hello.’”

— Founder of the Chat Bench program in London

With the help of simple signage, an existing bench is transformed into a low-cost “chat bench” and a community can publicly demonstrate its dedication to ending loneliness by designating public spaces as a place to meet and connect.*

Scan here with your phone to answer 3 questions about your experience with isolation and loneliness.
Whether you’re looking for connections or to volunteer, here are some resources to get you started.

**BAGLY Social Support Meetings**
Support meetings for LGBTQ+ youth to connect with peers. 617-227-4313
www.bagly.org/youth-programs

**Best Buddies Adult Friendship Program**
Helps create friendships for those with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities. 800-892-8339
www.bestbuddies.org

**Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Eastern Massachusetts**
Helps develop one-on-one relationships to support social and emotional development for youth. 617-542-9090
www.emassbigs.org/

**Boston Appalachian Mountain Club**
Provides year-round group hiking for non-members and members.
Email: localwalks@amcboston.org
www.amcboston.org/committee/walks/

**Boston Cares - Allies for Immigrants**
Conversation groups to enhance English skills for adults.
Email: jxayachak@bostoncares.org
www.bostoncares.org/

**Boston’s AgeStrong Creative Aging Program**
Sponsored by Goddard House Community Initiatives
Engages older adults in participatory arts programming including art, music, dance and other forms of creative expression. 617-635-4366
www.boston.gov/Age-Strong-Events

**CaptionCall**
Phones for individuals with hearing loss. Transcribes conversations so other speakers’ words appear on your CaptionCall screen
www.captioncall.com

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**How to Designate a “Happy to Chat” Bench in Your Community**

**Consider** existing benches and how they may be rebranded as “Happy to Chat” benches or if new benches are required.

**Reach out** to appropriate officials in your community with a plan for where the benches would be most effective due to pedestrian traffic.

**Engage** community residents in the process and aim for maximum publicity to get the word out about this concept.

**Local Example Location:**
Bridgewater, MA

**Inspiration:** Bridgewater is a college town with a lot of pedestrian traffic. The Council on Aging (COA) director was motivated to consider ways of building connections between older residents of the community and younger students.

**Program Contact:** Bridgewater Council on Aging 508-697-0929

Ethos Community Cafes
Boston congregate meal programs nurture social connections for older adults. 617-522-6700 www.ethocare.org/services/nutrition/community-cafes/

Fenway Health LGBTQIA+ Helpline

Fenway Health Peer Listening Line
(25 and under) A safe space for LGBTQIA+ youth to speak with peers (ages 16-25). 617-267-2535 www.fenwayhealth.org/care/wellness-resources/help-lines/

FriendshipWorks
FriendshipWorks' mission is to end elder isolation and, through a menu of programs, create connections by matching volunteers with older adults (60+) in need of assistance and companionship. 617-482-1510 www.fw4elders.org

Gay for Good Boston
Connects the LGBTQ community with local volunteer projects. Email: boston@gayforgood.org www.gayforgood.org/boston/

GoGo Grandparent
Service assists older adults ordering rides, pharmacy deliveries, groceries, and more. 855-664-6872 www.gogograndparent.com

Healthful Chat
Online chat rooms offer a support system for those who live with a physical disability or mobility issue. www.healthfulchat.org/physical-disability-mobility-issues-chat-room.html

LGBTQIA+ Aging Project Weekly Zoom Drop-In Group
Informal discussion groups created to keep LGBTQIA+ older adults connected. 857-313-6590 www.fenwayhealth.org/the-fenway-institute/lgbtqia-aging-project/programs-support-groups

LGBTQIA+ Community Cafés
LGBTQIA+ older adults can share a meal and connect with one another virtually and in person. To find a program in your area, contact: 857-313-6590 www.fenwayhealth.org/care/medical/lgbt-nutrition/

Little Brothers-Friends of the Elderly
Opportunities to form intergenerational friendships. 617-524-8882 www.lbfeboston.org/

Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired Support Groups
Once a month peer support meetings which provide support for those coping with serious vision loss. 888-613-2777 www.mabvi.org/services/support-groups/

Massachusetts Councils on Aging (COA)
COAs across the state connect community members with memory cafes, transportation services, health information programs and more. To find your local Council on Aging: www.mcoaonline.com/what-is-a-coa/coa-directory/

Mass Ride Match
Helps vulnerable populations receive access to safe transportation in their area. 800-483-2500 www.massridematch.org

Memory Cafes in MA
Find Memory Cafes near you and enjoy welcoming gatherings for individuals living with dementia, their family members, friends and caregivers. www.memorycafedirectory.com/memory-cafes-in-massachusetts/

Men’s Group
An online men’s support group that provides space to speak about emotions and life issues. www.mensgroup.com

Neighbor Brigade
Connects community members with residents facing difficulties and needing help with meal preparation, household chores, and more. 855-241-4357 Email: info@neighborbrigade.org www.neighborbrigade.org
Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD)
A 1:1 mentoring program to empower ages 6-24 with disabilities to meet their full potential. 617-556-4075
www.pyd.org

Sofa Singers
Virtual 45-minute community singing programs that also teaches participants about songs.
www.thesofasingers.com

PureSpark
Virtual peer support groups for people of color in MA, with a focus on Black women.
www.yourpurespark.com/

The Dinner Party
Adults in their 20s and 30s who have lost a close friend or family members can join a virtual "dinner table" support group and connect with peers facing similar struggles.
Email: info@thedinnerparty.org
www.thedinnerparty.org

Samaritans
A 24/7 helpline for those in need of immediate crisis support, allows people to speak one on one via phone or text.
Crisis 877-870-4673
www.samaritanshope.org

The Emotional PPE Project
Connects healthcare workers impacted by the Covid-19 crisis with licensed mental health professionals who can help. No cost. No insurance. Just a trained professional to talk to.
https://directory.emotionalppe.org/

Virtual Knit or Crochet from Home
Virtually meet others while you knit items to donate to local charities.
Email: volunteers@bostoncares.org
https://bostoncares.org/opportunity/a0C1J00000IzHXKUA3

Silent Book Club
Promotes social health and self-care and provides time to connect with new people, have food, and read their book of choice.
Address: 338 Newbury Street, Boston 617-267-8688
www.tridentbookscafe.com/event

Among Other Resources, You’ll Find:
“It’s the Little Things: A Community Resource for Strengthening Social Connections”
“Promising Little Things to Strengthen Social Connections”
“10 Small Ways to Reach Out”
Reach out Massachusetts is the Task Force to End Loneliness & Build Community’s campaign to mobilize individuals, communities and organizations to address social isolation and is facilitated by AARP Massachusetts and the Gerontology Institute at UMass Boston.

For more information on how to reach out and connect, go to www.reachoutma.com

Compiled by the Event Committee for the advanced screening of the documentary All the Lonely People
www.allthelonelypeoplefilm.com/