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**Back to the Basics: The Building Blocks of Connection**

At one time or another, we’ve all been lonely. For most of us, it’s temporary. While people of all ages and backgrounds experience isolation and loneliness, older adults and people with disabilities are uniquely susceptible and being isolated and lonely is a common reality.

But what is loneliness and social isolation? Often used together, there are some differences:

* Social isolation is an *objective* measure of the number of contacts someone has. People who are socially isolated have little, if any, contact with other people.
* Loneliness is a *subjective* feeling about the gap between a person’s desired levels of social contact and their actual social contact. The common saying “have you ever felt lonely in a room full of people” speaks to this.

If you or someone you know is feeling lonely or isolated there are many things you can do to improve your social health. This year, the Wisconsin Coalition for Social Connection, a group of partners working to increase social connection statewide, suggests going back to the basics. Take time to call, video chat, visit or plan an outing with an older adult or person with disability in your life. Other things you could do or suggest to a loved one include volunteering or getting a job, taking a health promotion class, joining a fitness facility or local club, visiting a park, or using technology.

Both loneliness and social isolation are associated with serious health impacts including a 29% increased risk of heart disease a 32% increased risk of stroke, and a 50% increased risk of dementia as well as a significant increased risk for depression and anxiety. Take time to build your connections. You may start small but challenge yourself and see the difference it makes.

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To learn more or join the movement, visit [ConnectWI.org](http://ConnectWI.org).

If you have room, you could add flyer & text: The Wisconsin Coalition for Social Connection, in partnership with the Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging’s Age Well Series, is holding a FREE webinar on this topic on Monday, November 11th from 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. The webinar will discuss the benefits of connection and include a diverse panel discussion. See flyer for additional details. Register at <https://bit.ly/3XTiLup>.

