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# Insight

Topics, Trends & Tips

Plus Information about Social Security & VA Disability

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## Many of Us Feel Lonely. But We Can Do Something About It.

“More than three in five Americans are lonely, with more and more people reporting feeling like they are left out, poorly understood and lacking companionship,” National Public Radio reports citing a new survey from health insurer Cigna. Furthermore, despite living in a technological society that is connected like never before, loneliness may be increasing.

In fact, the Cigna study found that social media may actually increase

the sense of loneliness. Seventy-three percent of heavy social media users reported being lonely compared with 52% of light users. Across the board loneliness appears to be more common among men with 63% of them saying they feel lonely compared with 58% of women. Regardless of gender, loneliness appears to be on the rise. This recent study showed a 13% increase in loneliness since Cigna first conducted this survey in 2018.

While we often think that loneliness hits seniors the hardest, the study debunks that notion. “Feelings of isolation were prevalent across generations,” reports NPR. “Gen Z — people who were 18 to 22 years old when surveyed — had the highest average loneliness score on the 80-point scale (about 50), and boomers had the lowest (about 43).”

While the report found that there are many factors that contribute to increased feelings of isolation, there is a common thread to ending loneliness: in-person connections. Doug Nemecek, chief medical officer for behavioral health at Cigna says “[s]haring...time to have a meaningful interaction and a meaningful conversation, to share our lives with others, is important to help us mitigate and minimize loneliness.”



Check your social media use and ask yourself if maybe it is time to dial back your screen time.

Many health professionals are calling for in-depth studies about loneliness, because how connected you feel with others not only impacts your mental health but your physical health as well. The U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration says that loneliness and social isolation can be as damaging to your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. “The good news is that friendships reduce the risk of mortality or developing certain diseases and can speed recovery in those who fall ill. Moreover, simply reaching out to lonely people can jump-start the process of getting them to engage with neighbors and peers,” according to Robin Caruso of CareMore Health.

Here from *goodhousekeeping.com* are some additional strategies for how you can be alone and happy.

## Many of Us Feel Lonely. But We Can Do Something About It.



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(Loneliness...continued from page 1.)

#### Name it. Validate it.

Telling other people you're lonely can feel scary, shameful, and self-defeating. But expressing that feeling can be the beginning of releasing it. "We tend to stigmatize loneliness in the U.S., equating it with being a loner or a loser," says Kory Floyd, Professor of Communication and Psychology at the University of Arizona. "That stigma encourages us to avoid admitting when we're lonely. Denying our loneliness only perpetuates it, so before we can recover, we have to be honest—at least with ourselves—about what we are experiencing."

#### Recognize that you are not alone in feeling lonely.

If as many as 60% of Americans report feel lonely, you know that you're sharing the same experience with millions of other people.

"Another way to create new, meaningful relationships can be going into your immediate community to volunteer."

#### Perform anonymous acts of kindness.

And recognize the kindness in others! Sometimes when you feel alone, you might feel like isolating yourself from the world, which only continues the cycle of loneliness. In that case, finding a group of friends to

hang out with or dropping into a large social scene can feel like a lot. So why not consider starting small? "Go out into the world and notice a smile from the store clerk," says Judith Orloff, MD, psychiatrist and author of *Thriving as an Empath*. "Hold a door for somebody or do something nice for a stranger and then you start to get the endorphins and the oxytocin going in your body. Oxytocin is the bonding hormone. It's what mothers have when they give birth. So oxytocin is important."

#### Give back to your community.

Along the same lines as performing an act of kindness, another way to create new, meaningful relationships can be going into your immediate community to volunteer. One of the best things to do for loneliness, experts say, is to focus on others rather than ourselves. Furthermore, volunteering may provide an easier opportunity to socialize, as you'll be working in tandem on the task at hand. You won't feel "on the spot" to put yourself out there and make new connections if you're already aligned on getting something done.

#### Dial back on social media usage.

Since people mostly post the good things in their lives (and maybe exaggerate them) on social media it is easy to believe that everyone else has better jobs, more fun-loving friends, bigger houses, and so on. Of course this isn't the truth, but bragging posts can drag you down. Check your social media use and ask yourself if maybe it is time to dial back your screen time.



## Comfort Food

From the kitchen of Janet Cuddigan

### Bacon Wrapped Grilled Sausages



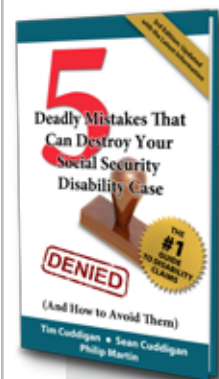
Overlap bacon around the entire length of fully cooked sausages. It takes about 2 slices of thin bacon for each piece of sausage and overlapping holds the bacon in place as it cooks. Use thin bacon so it cooks fully without burning.

Cover the outside of the bacon wrapped sausage with your favorite BBQ rub and it's ready for the grill. The goal here is to bring up the temperature of the sausage and fully cook the bacon.

It takes about 1 hour 15 minutes at 275 degrees to fully brown your bacon wrapped sausages.

Once the bacon is brown, brush both sides with your favorite BBQ sauce and let it go 5 minutes more on each side.

Adapted from howtobbqright.com



"5 Deadly Mistakes That Can Destroy Your Social Security Disability Case" is the #1 guide to improving the odds of winning a disability case.

For a FREE copy for you or someone you care about call Cuddigan Law at 402.933.5318 or email us at [lawteam@cuddiganlaw.com](mailto:lawteam@cuddiganlaw.com)

## Veteran Benefits You May Not Know About



Most veterans know about the basic health care and education benefits which they can get through the Department of Veterans Affairs. However, there are dozens of other little-known benefits which, if you are a veteran, can improve your life and the life of your family. Here are four benefits that you may not know about. If you are a veteran we encourage you to check them out to see if you qualify.

#### Long-term Care.

Through the Aid and Attendance program, many veterans are eligible to receive money to cover the cost of nursing homes, assisted living programs, and other long-term care options. With the ability for couples to receive up to \$25,020 a year, the Aid and Attendance benefit will help take care of a significant portion of long-term care costs. Surviving spouses of veterans are also eligible to receive up to \$13,560 a year to cover their long-term care costs. Unfortunately, determining eligibility isn't always easy and each case is ultimately decided by the VA. But in general those who are eligible are veterans who served on active duty for at least 90 consecutive days, including at least one full day during a time of war, if they also qualify for the basic Veterans Pension and meet the clinical and financial requirements.

#### Caregiver Support

Should you choose to take care of an ailing veteran at home, the Department of Veterans Affairs offers a caregiver support program. While this program does not offer any monetary support to caregivers, they are provided with a free support line and a caregiver support coordinator to help navigate military benefits and the stress of care giving.

#### Tuition Waiver

The University of Nebraska and all Nebraska state and community colleges may waive tuition for children of service members who died on active duty, as a result of active duty, or are permanently and totally disabled as a result of active duty.

#### Hunting & Fishing Licenses

Nebraska resident veterans who are at least 50 percent disabled can get free lifetime hunting and fishing licenses. Any veteran 64 years old and older can get a hunting and fishing license for \$5. Iowa resident veterans with at least a 0% VA disability rating can get a lifetime hunting or fishing license for \$7.

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Disability law is all we do.



Sean & Tim Cuddigan

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Are you a disabled veteran?

Before you apply for VA disability benefits call Cuddigan Law at 402.933.5318 or email us at [lawteam@cuddiganlaw.com](mailto:lawteam@cuddiganlaw.com) for your FREE copy of our book *The Essential Guide to VA Disability Claims*.

