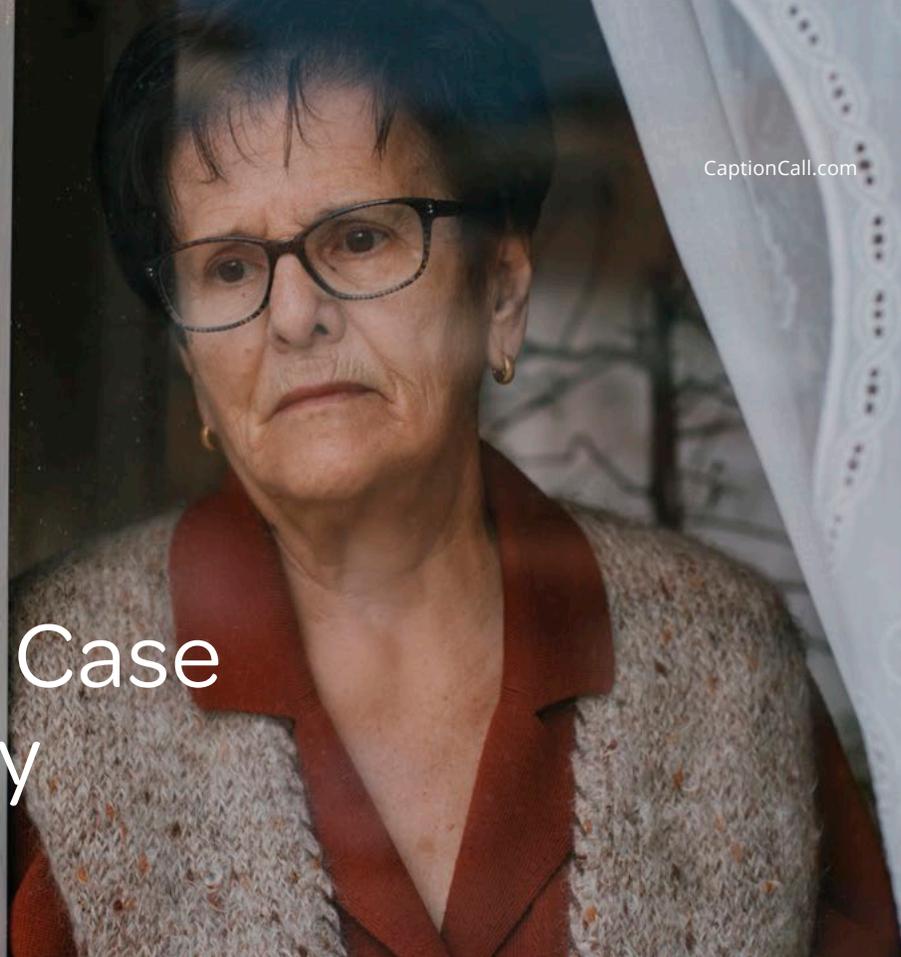


Article: Hearing Health & Wellness

Making the Case for Sociality



Lofty Aging Goals

We live in a world that operates on time. Aging is the name we have given to our personal relationship with time. After centuries of personal experience and scientific observation, humanity has defined social norms that explain aging trends and establish expectations. Most people come to accept these expectations and live their life with these expectations in the front or back of their mind. However, we never have to look far to find exceptions to the trends, nor do we have to go too far back in time to see that trends and expectations shift.

For a moment, let's imagine that we, and those we care for, are the exceptions, completely free of any aging expectations. We are free to paint a picture of aging to our complete liking. Given freedom to age as we like, wouldn't it be nice to feel honored, valued, heard and appreciated for all our years of experience? Wouldn't it be nice if more time in our bodies and minds made life better, not worse? Wouldn't it be nice to be surrounded by friendships that feel uplifting and sustainable? Wouldn't it be nice to be engaged in activities that contribute in meaningful

ways? Wouldn't we want more than a long life? Wouldn't we want a quality life?

To make such a leap may seem impossible, but we have the tools to assist us in taking an improved approach to aging. Awareness of where we are versus where we want to be is one of our most powerful tools. Another powerful tool we have to bring about quality aging is each other ... our relationships and interactions with others!

Let's Be "Real" for a Minute

Realistically, most of us thinking about quality aging are already well along the path, and momentum is carrying us swiftly through well-defined social expectations. By the time we realize aging is something we should be mindful of, we are feeling the aches and pains, sleeping poorly, feeling overworked and undervalued, experiencing vision and hearing loss, all while caring for those who feel even worse off than us. Often, by the time we realize we want quality aging, it feels "too late". But it's not too late. Science has discovered something powerful to combat the physical and mental conditions of aging as we know them—human interaction.



Uninvited Conditions Don't Have to Lead to Social Isolation and Loneliness

Social isolation is an objective state where a person does not have many, if any, people to interact with. It manifests itself physically. Someone who lives alone, rarely leaves the house, and goes for days at a time without talking to another person is socially isolated. That person may or may not feel lonely.

Most people don't consciously choose to live in social isolation, and would feel lonely if they did. However, as people age, uninvited illness, disability, a change of residence and death put socially inclined individuals in positions of sudden social isolation. Then loneliness sets in.

Loneliness is a subjective state of painful emotion. Loneliness is not depression, but can quickly lead to depression, putting one's quality aging goals practically out of view.



Making the Case for Sociality

There is an important link between "being social" and "quality aging." This means that when those unexpected events occur, such as falling, illness, disability, moves or the death of a loved one, we can't afford to let ourselves, or those we care for, retreat into isolation.

Studies reveal that sociality is our first line of defense when it comes to quality aging because it:

Gives us a sense of purpose and feelings of belonging	Increases self-esteem and confidence
Can motivate us to eat better and exercise	Improves physical health
Fosters faster recovery from illness and injury	Improves our mood
Improves self-awareness	Assists with better sleep
Lowers blood pressure	Lessens depression
Challenges the mind	Provides inspiration
Lowers risk for dementia	Helps us live longer

Quality Aging With CaptionCall

Hearing loss is one of the most common causes for social isolation that leads to loneliness for aging adults. Quite often, hearing loss happens slowly, over time. People don't often realize that it's happening, or don't want to admit that it's happening.

CaptionCall is designed to help individuals with difficulty hearing on the telephone stay socially engaged by enabling them to hear and read what their callers say. It helps your clients use the phone again with confidence. Encourage those whom you are caring for to ask themselves, "Is it possible that I am retreating into isolation because I have trouble hearing?" Encourage them to be honest. Help them to be aware of the risks associated with untreated hearing loss, and then let's work together to eliminate loneliness!