

# Staying Connected: Things to Do

## Adult Education and Learning Opportunities

Keeping your mind active and staying socially connected are vitally important to keeping yourself happy, healthy, and mentally sharp. Here are a selection of a few of many resources available:

- **Libraries:** Your local library may be an excellent source of community engagement. Many libraries are offering both in-person and virtual events. Offerings will vary significantly based on location.
- **Senior Planet:** This is a unique community of older adults with an emphasis on interactive, lifelong learning. They offer unique seminars and workshops on a variety of topics. Adults can become members by making an annual donation of any amount. <https://seniorplanet.org/>
- **Well Connected:** In this time of separation, Well Connected and Well Connected Español are here to provide laughs, intellectual stimulation, inspiration, conversation and more, all via groups you can join from home, by phone or online at no cost to you. <https://covia.org/services/well-connected/>

## Religious Communities

Faith and spirituality are important to many older adults, who may be struggling to engage with their religious communities while maintaining social distancing. Many places of worship have embraced virtual technology to record and broadcast sermons or offer community engagement activities. Older adults should reach out to their local place of worship to see what options are available. There are also a number of virtual resources for various religious communities. A small sampling is below:

- **The Online Faith Collective:** This website houses a collection of online worship services, organized by faith. A number of Christian denominations, nondenominational services, and Jewish services are available. <https://onlinefaithcollective.org/>
- **Virtual Mosque:** A website housing articles and sermons on Islamic faith, with media available in English, Arabic, Spanish, and Malay. <https://www.virtualmosque.com/>
- **Catholic Digest** is maintaining an updated list of resources for those of Catholic faith during the pandemic, including liturgies, discussion questions, inspirational music, and more. <http://www.catholicdigest.com/faith/prayer/free-online-catholic-resources-to-use-at-home-during-covid-19-outbreak/>

## Museum and Zoo Tours

Many national landmarks have begun offering online experiences. These “virtual visits” can be more engaging if performed with a companion. Loved ones sheltering apart can participate in these experiences simultaneously while communicating with each other by phone or interactive video platform, allowing them to make observations, discuss what they see, and learn together. A small sampling of free experiences:

- **Shedd Aquarium (Chicago, IL)** offers an At-Home with Shedd interactive tour, including interactive learning activities. This is a great option to do with

Adapted from GeriPal: A Geriatrics and Palliative Care Blog

<https://www.geripal.org/2020/09/Virtual-Resources-for-Older-Adults-COVID19.html>

grandchildren, or for anyone that enjoys aquatic animals.

**<https://www.sheddaquarium.org/educators/stay-home-with-shedd>**

- The Smithsonian Museum of Natural History (Washington, DC) offers virtual tours. Visitors have the option of self-guided tours or narrated tours of select exhibits. **<https://naturalhistory.si.edu/visit/virtual-tour>**
- The MET (New York, NY) offers MET 360°, an immersive video tour of 6 galleries within this historic space. **<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/online-features/met-360-project>**

## **Fitness**

There are a number of fitness courses offered virtually. Older adults should always discuss the safety of initiating a new exercise program with their primary care providers and consider a physical therapy evaluation if they have significant impairments in balance or mobility. If safe to participate in an exercise program, a number of older-adult specific programs exist:

- The National Institute on Aging houses a collection of resources on safe exercising for older adults; this is a great resource for adults who may be new to exercise. **<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-physical-activity>**
- Silver Sneakers has a variety of exercise classes tailored for older adults across a wide spectrum of functional and fitness levels. There are both supervised classes (through Zoom and/or Facebook Live) and on-demand video content. Silver Sneakers membership is supported by many, but not all, Medicare-Advantage plans. **<https://tools.silversneakers.com/>**
- The YMCA offers a variety of on-demand video courses geared for older adults, from chair aerobics to tai chi. **<https://www.ymca.net/your-y-at-home-for-active-older-adults>**

## **Creative Activities at Home**

Active participation in creative, structured, goal-oriented activities can provide variety and cognitive stimulation.

- **Cooking:** Whether preparing a favorite meal from a cherished family cookbook or looking for new recipes on cooking shows or YouTube, cooking is a great way for older adults to be adventurous while remaining socially distanced. For people with cognitive impairment, supervision and careful recipe selection should be considered.
- **Learning a new skill:** There are a seemingly infinite number of tutorials on Youtube – from crafting to learning an instrument, it's easy to learn new skills at home. Also consider the free website and/or phone application DuoLingo for a free, fun, interactive way to learn a new language. **<https://www.duolingo.com/>**
- **Watching TV or reading a book:** These activities can be enjoyable but are passive experiences. For more interaction, older adults can read a book or watch a show alongside a friend, family member, or spouse, and set aside time to discuss the experience. Many books or television shows have reviews or even published “discussion questions” online, to help guide an interactive discussion that relies on recall, processing, and critical thinking.