



The more active seniors can be, the better. Getting outside for some fresh air and exercise is beneficial. (Halfpoint/Shutterstock)

FAMILY & HOME

Caring for Our Elders in Trying Times

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The year 2020 hasn't been easy for many, but it's been particularly hard on seniors.

I asked Lisa Cini, an expert on lifestyle and aging issues, about her ideas for how to best support and care for the oldest members of our family in times like these. Here's what she said.

The Epoch Times: In your work advising seniors, what have you found to be the biggest challenges they've faced this year?

Lisa Cini: Most seniors already feel increased isolation, so with restrictions on visitors at senior living facilities and enforced social distancing, many have

found a profound sense of loneliness and sadness during this time. In addition, things that can come naturally to younger generations, like setting up FaceTimes or Zooms, may not be as easy to navigate, as older adults tend to rely on their children and grandchildren to help them with any tech troubles.

The Epoch Times: Many families are concerned for their elder family members as we navigate trying times. What can people do to comfort and support them?

Ms. Cini: There are many things we can do from a distance to support our loved ones! The things we enjoy in person can easily be shared via Zoom, like cooking together or enjoying a meal. For grandparents who miss telling their grandchildren a bedtime story, I suggest simply sending a copy of a cherished book to a loved one and keeping another copy at home. That way, kids can hold the book while grandparents read to them over video chat.

Studies from AARP show that 90 percent of seniors don't want to go into senior living. If the option is there for you, now is the perfect time to consider a multigenerational household, as you're able to support and care for each other in person. My grandmother, my parents, and my kids and husband were all able to live in our house. By living in this environment, we're able to see and learn things about each other that we normally wouldn't get to if they lived by themselves.

I outlined my family experience in my book "Hive: The Guide to Multigenerational Living," which provides tips, tricks, and interior design to have the best experience while living with multiple generations under one household.

The Epoch Times: What practical things can we do to bring joy to the seniors in our lives this holiday season?

Ms. Cini: These are trying times, and it's been difficult to maintain some sort of normalcy. Make sure you are still connecting with the seniors in your life—you should have regular calls and take the time to share memorable moments. If the kids make a present or cards for their grandparents, send it over to them! Create memories together by thinking outside of the box, whether that's

throwing a virtual dance party, doing a car drive by, or coming up with a family cookbook with favorite recipes.

The Epoch Times: What are your favorite gift ideas for seniors this year?

Ms. Cini: The best ideas are thoughtful and tactical. Presents that can improve quality of life are great, like the Human Charger light therapy device to enhance energy levels and help get restful, sustained sleep. The charger provides an entire day's worth of sun in 12 minutes and plugs into earbuds.

Gifts I highly recommend year-round are devices from Fitbit, Garmin, Apple Watch, and Kardia, which give key insights to health. You can challenge seniors to get moving through fitness competitions, whether that's meeting a step count, going for daily walks, etc.

The Epoch Times: What advice would you give a senior about how to thrive during these times?

Ms. Cini: Be as active as you can be. If you're able to exercise, do a chair workout, take a short safe walk—anything helps. The more active, the better for mental and physical health. Getting outside for even 10 minutes a day decreases anxiety, improves blood flow, and fresh air is great for the lungs.

Get in touch with loved ones, even those you may not have seen in years. If you know how to Google or Facebook search, you're one step ahead! If not, ask a loved one to help. Reach out to old classmates, roommates, and so on. You can start a pen-pal system. Consider joining a virtual book club. From the comfort of your own home, many library systems are offering free e-books to download onto a smart device. This is a simple way to stay connected, even if from a distance.

The Epoch Times: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Ms. Cini: Reduce your sugar intake—it's horrible for the brain and the body. Because we're cooped up and not moving as much, we are not able to burn off what we once could. Sugar is also linked to poor cognition. Get a pair of earbuds so you can hear better on Zoom or FaceTime. You'll be able to connect much better when you're not struggling to hear.