

Who seniors really are

0:06

The funny thing about about aging in 2020 is that young people tend to do a lot to try to make themselves unique. They they try their best to be, to be different to have their own identity. And, and they forget that actually, as we age, our life experiences kind of naturally make us very different. And the individuals that are older now have been through a lot of different things. And they've also been the beneficiary of incredible advances in health care which allow them to live in a healthy way for a lot longer. And so they've also been recently enabled to to learn more about their situation through through social media and they have been very quick to look for ways that they can remain healthy or benefit from the the tremendous social advantages of having internet access, and many of them are still running marathons into their 70s and many others actually go back to school and get another degree in their 60s.

Dealing with Broken Routines

1:30

As we age we do tend to become stuck in our ways. And sometimes that's a really good thing we I have numerous people who meet at 6am and walk the mall. And of course they can't do that at this time. And I'm sure just like, other individuals like to go to their gym or swimming pool their their, their routine has been changed and they're, they're not happy about it. It becomes more of an issue for individuals who do have memory problems or need assistance with their, you know, activities of daily living or even things such as bills and mowing the lawn and things like that because sometimes they're Their family members are the people that are in fact helping them are afraid that they they will get them sick and therefore they're not spending as much time with them. And so many of my patients are having to do more than they normally do for themselves. And it's hard because in some cases, they can't really provide the care to an elderly spouse and so it's it's very frustrating to them.

How negative news may affect seniors

2:50

I think that as far as the listening to the news and hearing that they're vulnerable, and then having your family say, "well, we can't come over mom because we don't want to get you sick." It starts to multiply and go around and around in their head and they, they become very afraid. And the fact is that older people are more at risk, but just like anything else, there's such a tremendous benefit to spending some time with them. If you're six feet away wearing a mask, it's certainly better than in many cases than just not going at all. I've also had some that have been afraid to go outside they don't understand that it's unlikely they're going to become ill due to going outside and sitting in the sun. But it's it's a it's like a jail sentence being stuck in your home.

How caregivers may be struggling

3:52

Imagine having to live with someone who needs a lot of help, your kids are home from school, you're working from home and someone is going to have to be kind of neglected and that would be the older individual. So it's very hard to do everything. We can't do everything and it's especially difficult when an older person needs constant supervision and help because they're not the same as babies. They they get up and move around and they get frustrated and it's very difficult for caregivers right now.

The importance of allowing end of life discussions

4:34

It if I had to pick one, one opportunity that this epidemic is presenting to us is an opportunity to make it okay to talk about end of life decisions with older people. It's just something that's that's for decades been suggested and not really carried out because no one really wants to talk about it. And young people often think that, you know, it'll scare their, their parents or grandparents and they don't want to think about it. The older individuals assume that their children or grand children will know what to do, and it doesn't get written down and documented. But But actually, the conversation itself is the most important thing because it allows an older person to have some control rather than just assuming that someone else will take care of it. A lot of that is probably because they don't really want to bring the subject up because they're they either tried it before and it didn't go over, or else they're afraid that they're going to get in, get a lecture, and they want to talk about this kind of thing. And honestly, during a crisis is not a good time to do it. But at this point, it's a lot better than waiting until they get sick and have to go to the hospital.

Why COVID-19 should not be considered a death sentence for seniors

6:17

No numbers ever have said that, that individuals that are over a certain age are very likely to die. And that's that's kind of not what I'm hearing on television. And the implication that everyone has is "well, I'm young so I don't have to worry about this." And actually, the older people are worried because they're hearing that kind of thing. You know, the majority of individuals over 85 do not die if they become infected with Coronavirus.

How your behavior may affect seniors

6:55

Particularly individuals with memory problems. They're better at picking up feelings than they are picking up actual words. So if you're being very, very cautious around them and putting masks on and not touching them and washing your hands, they may not understand what Coronavirus is, but they are understanding that you're acting weird, and that doesn't make

them feel good. And so even people with relatively advanced memory problems that don't really understand the statistics, they will pick up the fear that everyone is kind of displaying in their behavior while they're tending to their needs

Why structure and positivity are the best medicine

7:44

Structure structure structure. No, the less you can change the more patterns and an older people like that, but particularly individuals with memory problems.

7:58

And I think that's what people could really benefit their their older parents or grandparents by by making consistent contact and not on the phone acting like "well we're so glad you're still alive because you have to be really careful because you know, you could get sick and because of older people are more likely to die" you really need to avoid that. And it's, it's hard because you are a little bit frightened. And that's a good thing actually. But with the older people they're shutting in, they're being, seeing these things on TV. The last thing they need is for you, their family member and their support to to make things worse. So positive attitude structure, structure structure. It just is the best medicine for them right now.

Importance of a senior having control of their life

8:54

it's really difficult when older people are out there on their own. They're living perhaps in a different state than their family members are. And it's really hard not to tell them what to do, but they don't need that right now. Some people do need that. But at this point in the middle of a pandemic, there's not a whole lot of options for you. I think that's, that's one of the other things that's come up right now is this hopefully will teach us. We'll go back and review the game films and realize that we could have done things differently.

What we may be able to learn from long term care facilities

9:35

For instance, we've we've heard all about this is not that much worse than the flu. Well, that's really not true, it is much worse than the flu. But for people in long term care facilities, it isn't that much different than the flu and the long term care facilities have a very clear strategy to to step up the infection control to prevent outbreaks in their facilities. I don't think other aspects of the healthcare system have really done that. And so maybe we'll all learn and I'll there are many family members that are very agitated about not being able to visit their loved ones in a long term care facility right now. And that's something that we need to go back and look at. I

don't I think it's a good idea personally. But I think family members should understand that that's what being in a long term care facility means and and the hospitals are having the same problem actually.

How seniors are struggling with general health

10:42

I'm really worried about my patients. I don't know where they are. They're not coming to the clinic, they're not going to the hospital. They're not seeking care for their conditions that sometimes require medical attention. And I'm really concerned that this isolation between patients and their primary care doctor or specialist is being affected in a negative way. I think there could be some outcomes that are unnecessary if we can find a better way to incorporate medical care while isolating people from dangerous situations.

Seniors struggling with medications or afraid to ask questions

11:31

People all have their own routines. In many ways, I believe older people are more compliant with their medication than younger people, because first of all, that's the way they were brought up their generation. And secondly, they have family members or caregivers that are keeping an eye on them. And that's where things have kind of broken down because they can't. They can't. They feel as if they can't go into the home. Many people have pillboxes that arrange things if they've gotten really more complex than that with actual pillboxes that talk and they open little doors at the right time. It's it's pretty interesting how far they've come. But let's just say you have a regular old pill box and your son or daughter comes by every Saturday afternoon and puts the right pill in the right little hole. You could do that and you could social distance and you could do that just fine. If somehow they're having trouble and some people don't have pill boxes, I get numerous calls from family members. And the trouble with that is, I know the family members already know what to do. It's just that their parents or grandparents don't know what they know, and they can't do it over the phone. And and so I would love to hear from some of those patients, not their family, but the patients, but they don't call because they're embarrassed sometimes. And so it's really, the time for embarrassment and, you know, feeling that you have to be strong is, This is not the time for heroes we need people to be willing to call and ask questions. And and that's an answer I can I can usually provide a good answer to that. The drugstores are all open you can most of them will probably deliver at the very least driving through the drive up window, if you do drive is social isolation by definition, and you can pick up your medicines and the pharmacists know everything about medications, particularly your medications since they have a computer that has your name on it that has your medications, and so it's not a time to be hesitant to ask questions, whether it's your physician, the nurse at the office, the pharmacist, or maybe even your family members who don't realize that you're struggling more now than you were normally because you're afraid to ask questions.