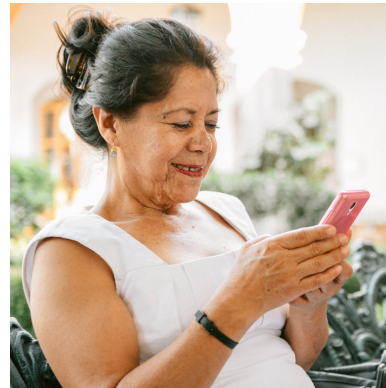


# Connect2Affect



## Community Workshop Facilitator Guide



**AARP** Foundation  
connect **2** affect

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# Workshop Overview

**Title**

Connect2Affect Community Workshop

**Time**

Each Connect2Affect Community Workshop is designed to last about 60 minutes.

**Host**

Community-based organizations and AARP state offices

**Workshop Objectives**

- Raise awareness around social isolation and loneliness.
- Transform the way in which community members view social connections.
- Empower older adults with tools and motivation to help build and maintain strong support networks and meaningful relationships.

**Directions**

1. Activity: Icebreaker
2. Presentation: *Importance of Living Socially Connected*
3. Activity: Friendventory
4. Wrap-Up

**Target Audience**

Older adults and AARP members

**AARP Foundation Contact**

E. Casey, [ecasey@aarp.org](mailto:ecasey@aarp.org)

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# Workshop Preparation Guidelines

These preparation guidelines are intended to provide you with direction on how best to achieve the goals of the Connect2Affect Community Workshop.

## Setup

Each Connect2Affect Community Workshop is designed to last about 60 minutes.

The Community Workshop is intended to engage your audience in meaningful conversation — and the right setup will encourage easy and comfortable communication. Here are some key steps to prepare for the virtual workshop:

- Consider the environment where you'll be leading the conversation and what participants will see. Is there adequate lighting? Is the background appropriate and not distracting?
- Join your session early (at least 30 minutes) to give yourself enough time to run a video and audio check.
- Open the documents you plan to share before the session begins.
- Just as you would for an in-person setting, greet participants as they join the workshop.
- Speak clearly and ask your participants if they can hear you at the beginning of the session. If you don't get a response, use the chat box to ask the same question.
- Remind your participants to test their microphone (if using) and speakers.
- Encourage attendees to list their first name as the display name, and to use the chat window for messages throughout the session in order to increase interaction and engagement with one another.

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## Workshop Sections

Each Community Workshop is designed to engage and educate your audience. Brief descriptions of each section of the workshop are included below, with detailed preparation guidelines for each component in the pages that follow.

### Workshop Sections

**Icebreaker Activity (page 6):** Each Community Workshop begins with an icebreaker activity to make attendees feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings.

***Importance of Living Socially Connected Presentation (page 8):***

The interactive *Importance of Living Socially Connected* presentation illustrates the risks of social isolation and loneliness.

**Friendventory (page 10):** Attendees use the Friendventory to make their connection plan. The exercise includes identifying the people who make up their social network, including who they can rely on for support and whether there are any gaps.

# Icebreaker Activity

## Get Acquainted



**Duration**  
15 Minutes

### Preparation

1. Select one question from the list of possible icebreaker questions provided on page 7.
2. Write the selected question into Slide 2 in the PowerPoint presentation.

### Directions

1. Once all attendees have joined the session, use this time to introduce yourself to the group.

#### **Sample introduction:**

*Hi, my name is Chrissy Fehskens and I'm a Communications Senior Advisor at AARP Foundation.*

*Let me begin by sharing a little bit about myself: I'm originally from New Jersey and I have lived in Washington, D.C., for the past 15 years.*

*The icebreaker question that I received today is, "What is something new you tried recently and loved?" I have started biking recently and love it. I go for a bike ride almost every morning before work now, and I've really enjoyed having the time outside. It's been a great way to start my day!*

2. After you've introduced yourself and answered your own icebreaker question, ask everyone around the virtual meeting room to introduce themselves with:
  - Their name.
  - Where they live.
  - Where they are from.
  - The answer to their icebreaker question.

**Note:** For a virtual meeting, it's recommended that the facilitator call on the attendees by name to provide their response.

**Tip:** With larger audiences, many virtual meeting tools provide the option for breakout rooms for group discussion. If unable to use a breakout, have attendees place their answers in the chatbox. The facilitator should announce the answers coming through to make the sharing of this information as dynamic and engaging as possible.

3. After everyone has introduced themselves and answered their icebreaker question, begin the *Importance of Living Socially Connected* presentation.

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## Icebreaker Activity FAQ

### **What if I have a large group attending? Should all attendees answer the icebreaker question?**

We recommend breaking up larger groups into subgroups. Make the groups as even in size as possible so that one group doesn't finish with their icebreaker questions earlier than another. If you don't have the ability to break the virtual meeting into smaller groups, ask participants to share their information by using the chat feature. As the facilitator, announce the answers that are shared so the attendees are as engaged as possible.

### **What if participants are reluctant to introduce themselves and answer their icebreaker question?**

Attendees are not required to introduce themselves. Breaking up into smaller groups might help attendees feel more comfortable speaking in front of the group.

### **What do I do if one attendee is taking longer to answer than others and is holding up the workshop?**

Sometimes an attendee provides an answer that runs long or sparks unrelated conversations among the participants. If that happens, we advise listening for an appropriate moment to thank the attendee for their response and then move on to the next attendee.

#### ***Suggested response:***

*Thanks for introducing yourself and sharing your response to your icebreaker question. Since our time is limited, I want to be sure we get to every portion of the workshop. I'm going to ask that we move on to the next attendee, but you can either stay on the call after the workshop to continue this conversation, or email me to follow up.*

### **Icebreaker Activity Questions** (Listed in no particular order)

**Where have you found peace?**

**What is one of the kindest things someone has ever done for you?**

**What do you want to let go of?**

**How do you show love to others?**

**What are you working toward that you could use help with?**

**How do you show love to yourself?**

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# Importance of Living Socially Connected

## Presentation

**The risks of social isolation and loneliness  
and tips for getting and staying connected.**



**Duration**  
15 Minutes

### Preparation

1. In advance of your Connect2Affect Community Workshop, familiarize yourself with the presentation and practice presenting. (Sample comments are provided in the notes section of each slide. Please use these notes as guidelines while you present.) The presentation, with time for questions and feedback, should last about 10-15 minutes.
  - Note: We encourage facilitators to factor in the time that will be needed for the interactive elements of the presentation. For example, Slide 11 offers an opportunity for attendees to share what they have been doing to remain connected in recent weeks.
2. Once you review the presentation, if there are slides that you feel will not resonate with your audience, please remove.
  - With that said, we do recommend using all of the slides included in the presentation. However, we understand time limits and want to provide flexibility to ensure you connect with attendees.
3. If applicable, add local organizations and resources to Slide 12. Be sure to include the name of the organization or resource, along with contact information. Some examples to consider are local senior and community centers, libraries, and aging services providers. We recommend consulting with your AARP state office on appropriate local resources. The AARP Foundation Connect2Affect team is also available to help you identify organizations and resources.



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## Directions

1. Once the icebreaker activity is complete, transition into the presentation portion of the Community Workshop.
2. Begin by introducing the purpose of the presentation.

### **Sample introduction:**

*We are now going to review a presentation about the risks of social isolation and loneliness and what we can do to stay socially connected. If you have any questions at any time, please don't hesitate to ask. We will pause throughout for questions and feedback.*

3. Proceed with the presentation, using the presentation guidelines provided in the notes section for each respective slide.
4. Hold on Slide 14 to transition into the Friendventory portion of the Community Workshop.

## FAQ

### **How do I handle a question I don't know the answer to?**

If you're unsure how to answer an attendee's question, tell them you'll follow up after the class. Then, submit the question(s) to **E. Casey** at [ecasey@aarpp.org](mailto:ecasey@aarpp.org) and we'll get back to you with a response. Be sure to confirm the name and phone number or email address of the attendee so that you can follow up with them directly.

### **What should I do if an attendee asks a lot of repetitive questions that are holding up the presentation?**

If you're being stopped for a lot of questions that you feel are interrupting the flow of the presentation, try assessing how essential the questions are.

If you think the entire audience would benefit from hearing the answers to these questions, then by all means take the time to address them. You can try to make up the time toward the end of the class during one of the activities.

If the questions are overly specific to the asker or otherwise disruptive, ask the attendee if you can connect after the presentation via phone or email to discuss their questions.

# Friendventory Activity

## Make your connection plan.



### Duration

20 Minutes

### Preparation

Slides 14 and beyond facilitate two brief activities that we call the Friendventory. Participants will need their own paper and pen to complete the activities.

### Directions

1. When you reach Slide 14, you'll introduce the Friendventory activity, which is the final part of the presentation. Explain the purpose of the activity before presenting Slide 15.

#### **Sample explanation:**

*"Now that we've spent some time discussing the importance of staying connected, we're going to work on taking stock of your network of contacts and how connected you feel to them. Now more than ever, it's important to take a proactive approach to staying connected. In the same way the doctor takes our temperature and blood pressure to check on our physical health, this activity will help us get a better sense of our social health and which areas of it we might want to improve."*

2. Begin the activity:
  - After giving people a few moments to grab their pen and paper, use Slide 15 to help them get set up.
  - Using Slide 16, ask attendees to list names of individuals in column 1 who are in their network of contacts. In addition to friends, family members and neighbors, encourage them to consider people they may not be as close with but interact with often: Sunday school buddies and members of other groups they're active in; the neighbor they see regularly but don't yet know, etc.
  - Provide your own examples to help guide attendees.

#### **Suggested example:**

*"For instance, I see my neighbor Charlotte every day and we chat when we are both outside, but I haven't really gotten to know her."*

### **Directions** *(continued)*

3. Encourage attendees to try to list at least five names, but let them know they should come back to the exercise later and add to it until it's a complete inventory of their relationships.
4. Slide 17 will be used to help participants complete column 2.

#### **Sample explanation:**

*"Now we're going to evaluate the level of closeness and support in our relationships. Think of yourself as standing at the center of this bullseye. The people you are closest to and who you rely on are right there in your inner circle. The people you barely know or haven't connected with in a long time are also in your circle, but they are way out there in the outer circle."*

- You can illustrate this with your own examples: *"For instance, my spouse is right here in the center with me, but my neighbor Charlotte who I barely know is out there at the edge."*
  - Instruct the participants to complete column 2 by giving each person they listed in column one a rating on a scale of 1 to 3, with 1 being those who they are closest to, all the way to 3 at the outer edge of their circle.
5. The next slide is for completing column 3. Participants are to write down a specific next step for connecting with each individual within their circle. Let them know: *"Be specific about when you'll do it, and jot down any notes about topics you or your friend might like to connect about. As you think about how you will work to connect in each relationship, reflect on column 2, how close each person is to you. For your 2s and 3s, how might you draw this person closer? For your 1s, what habit can you begin to put in place to nurture and maintain that important relationship?"*
  6. Part 2 of the Friendvntory uses the same three-column set up. Use Slide 19 to prepare participants. Then, while still on Slide 19, introduce the purpose of part 2 with this information:

#### **Suggested explanation:**

*"The second part of our Friendvntory focuses on ourselves. If we want to maintain our connections and avoid isolation and loneliness, we have to take steps every day to support our physical and mental well-being — now more than ever! We're going to help you brainstorm three steps you can take every day to live a connected life."*

### Directions *(continued)*

- Column 1 (Slide 20): The first step to living a more connected life is to engage in more social activities. We should set a goal to do something with other people every day — even if right now it's over the phone or virtual. It can be as simple as completing one of the action steps you listed in part 1. This slide lists some other ideas for social activities that you can do right now. Use column 1 to jot down any of these that appeal to you — and add to your list with your own ideas.
  - Column 2 (Slide 21): *"Often when we feel lonely or cut off from people, we stop doing things that we like. This leads us to feeling bad and not enjoying life as much as we could. It seems simple, but sometimes just doing a small, pleasant activity can make a difference in how lonely we feel. Research supports this approach. So in column 2, list the things you enjoy doing or that are fun for you. Maybe they make your body feel better, or they warm your spirit, or they stimulate your mind. The slide also contains some ideas for you to note."*
  - Column 3 (Slide 22): *"Being physically active is another proven way we can feel better emotionally. The more we are able to move our bodies, the better our spirits are. We all have physical limitations, but you can increase your movement — even within your abilities. In column 3, list ways you might be more physically active. Don't expect too much of yourself at first; start off small. And make sure you follow all local guidelines related to staying home and maintaining physical distance from others. This slide has some ideas for you."*
7. Depending on timing and the size of the group, you can elicit participation throughout this section by encouraging people to share their own ideas. Be aware, though, that participants may be too engaged in writing and note-taking to join a discussion. Use your best judgment about your audience.
  8. At this point the Friendvntory is complete. Review the next steps listed on Slide 23 and then end the session. If you have additional time after reviewing next steps, you can host a brief closing discussion.

#### **Suggested closing discussion:**

*"Now that you've had the chance to think about the people in your social network and you've identified some actions for how you can become more connected, what do you think you will do to take those steps?"*

Ask attendees to please explain some of the next steps they identified and why they chose them.

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## FAQ

### **What do I do if attendees feel that the scaling system in the Circle of Closeness doesn't represent their relationships?**

That's all right! Friendships are nuanced. Ask them to choose the numbers they think are closest to how they would define their relationships, or tell them to feel free to create their own meaningful scale. If they'd like to expand on why their friendships are not represented on the scale, ask them to explain to the group when everyone is asked to share.

### **What if attendees say that they don't need more social support?**

Ask them to then focus on how they can maintain the support they do have and how they can offer more support to those around them. Even if someone has the support they want and need now, that still requires maintenance. For instance, do they regularly reach out to their support networks? Do they nurture those relationships through open communication and by offering support?

## Wrap-Up

### **Recap what we've learned.**



#### **Duration**

5 Minutes

#### **Directions**

1. Remind attendees that staying socially connected is essential for everyone, and that a conscious approach to our social health is something we all can and should create.
2. You may want to bring the slide of local organizations and resources back up, and encourage participants to contact the AARP state office with further questions.
3. Reiterate that Connect2Affect offers additional information and resources at [Connect2Affect.org](https://Connect2Affect.org).
4. Remind attendees to think about the action steps they have discussed today, and once again invite them to begin reaching out to some of the people they identified on their handout.
5. Thank the attendees for their participation.