Coping during social isolation

Through a survey and interviews, older adults in Western Australia shared how they coped during the pandemic.

* Many older adults were resilient:

- 63% of the older people we surveyed were only slightly affected by COVID-19.
- Close community networks were an important source of support.
- Everyone knows everyone down here. [During lockdown], most people rang other people to see that they were okay too, because that’s the kind of community that it is... [and] the priest was always available [during lockdown].

"I haven’t experienced any anxiety around COVID-19, and I didn’t know any from other people. It’s just a matter of these things occur, and you have to adapt and move on, that’s what older people have had to do in our lives, adapt and move on."

* However, sometimes it was really difficult:

- Two in five only had two or fewer people to chat with.
- Nearly one in five older adults said they chose not to access services during the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown even though they would have liked to.

"I haven’t experienced any anxiety around COVID-19, and I didn’t know any from other people. It’s just a matter of these things occur, and you have to adapt and move on, that’s what older people have had to do in our lives, adapt and move on."

Barriers to accessing support services include:
- the belief that I ‘should be able to cope on my own’
- a preference for face-to-face care

Digital and online technologies (e.g., social media, Zoom) were helpful for some people but not for others
- Helped me keep in touch with family and friends
- Saved travel time
- Can’t afford, don’t have access, don’t trust, and can’t use social media and zoom.

Nearly one in five older adults said they chose not to access services during the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown even though they would have liked to.

Additional resources:
- Association for Culturally Appropriate Services
  Mobile: 0413 619 748
  Web: www.afcas.net
  Email: info@afcas.net
- Council on the Ageing WA
  Phone: 9472 0104 (Tues & Wed)
  Web: www.cotawa.org.au
  Email: policy@cotawa.org.au
During the COVID-19 pandemic, organisations like yours have been taking care of isolated and vulnerable older adults in the community.

* Here’s what you said you needed:

- Providing new services for clients, such as domestic assistance and shopping and delivery.
- Training in use of Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) and hygiene measures.
- Networking with other organisations to share ideas.
- Self care and checking in on co-workers.
- Providing easy-to-understand information.
- Staying in touch through phone calls and postcards.
- More convenient funding in times of crises to adapt and change services.
- Technology upgrades to help you work from home when needed.
- More time in advance to help clients get comfortable using technology.

* Here’s what you said worked:

- Updating the organisation’s website and social media pages with advice on current restrictions, how to get medication, and useful phone numbers.
- Networking with other organisations to share ideas.
- Providing easy-to-understand information.
- Staying in touch through phone calls and postcards.
- Self care and checking in on co-workers.
- Our clients say “we can survive if the dishes are not done or if the floor is dirty, but we cannot survive without talking with anyone for weeks.” That’s very depressing and that’s very sad.
- It’s more internal than external. We are caring for our community and the businesses and everything else, but also self care and how we can help each other to do more for that.

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