



Isolation and How It Can Sneak Up On You!
by Sue Knobloch, Marketing Coordinator

We hear it often – “My mother was such a social person. She had lots of friends and was always on the go. But now she doesn’t get out much, and her friends aren’t able to come to visit like they used to. Often when I stop in, she’s sleeping in front of the TV.”

Of course she’s sleeping – what else is there to do? With no one to talk to, no one to interact with, what are her choices? Everyone craves socialization and the TV may be the only source of stimulation during those long hours alone in her home.

But how did this happen? Why didn’t we notice it earlier? Did she choose to become isolated? Was it a mindful choice? Of course not!

Isolation creeps in slowly and progressively. It may begin with an ailment. Maybe a touch of arthritis that gradually gets worse and makes it harder to get around. Maybe sight is failing just enough to make it hard to drive, especially at night or in bad weather. And so she doesn’t get out to those luncheons and committee meetings that used to mean so much to her. Soon it’s easier to watch church services on TV than to actually get dressed and drive, park and walk from the car into the church where she used to meet so many of her friends.

No one can avoid getting older, and aging in place may seem like the most desirable option. Many people plan ahead and build their homes to be senior-friendly – one-level living, grab bars in all the right places, wide hallways and doorways, etc. They may not even think about moving to a retirement community, and instead plan to depend on family or hire in-home care. But how do they plan to prevent isolation? Will a couple of family members and one or two caregivers be enough, day after day, month after month?

The good news is that oftentimes people begin to flourish again when socialization is increased. Retirement communities offer opportunities to meet and interact with a variety of stimulating people. Residents have many things in common – backgrounds, careers, special interests, hobbies, etc. And the activities and events in a retirement community provide a lot to look forward to and to talk about!

Seniors and their families have tough decisions to make. There are many things to take into consideration when planning for the time when assistance is needed. Isolation is one factor that is often overlooked.

Don’t let isolation sneak up on you or your family member.