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Meeting People Where They Are: Digital Tools to Promote Connection

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Disclosure

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Agenda

- Impact of Loneliness and Health
- Access to Technology
- Engagement Techniques



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- Adults with a lived experience of a mental health condition are disproportionately affected by medical comorbidity, earlier onset of disease, and have a shorten lifespan than people without a lived experience of a mental health condition.
- Age-related changes in metabolism, physiology, and activity that may contribute to the development of additional illnesses and worse health outcomes.

DE Hert et al. (2011). Physical illness in patients with severe mental disorders. I. Prevalence, impact of medications and disparities in health care. *World Psychiatry* 10(1):52-77.

Walker, E., McGee, R., & Druss, B. (2015). Mortality in mental disorders and global disease burden implications: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 72: 334-341.

Why Do People with a Lived Experience have a Shorter Lifespan?

N=40, peer support specialists and service users

- 1 hour Semi-structured interviews
- Interview guide developed with peer support specialists
 - Health behaviors
 - Loneliness



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Impact of Loneliness and Health

- People with serious mental illnesses experience 2.3 higher rates of loneliness compared to the general population (Badcock et al., 2015; Stain et al., 2012).
- Loneliness is a personal experience, in which a person believes their social connections is not aligned with their need for a sense of belonging (Ernst & Cacioppo, 1999).
- Loneliness is an often unrecognized dimension of health that has serious implications for cardiovascular health and mortality (Ong, Rothstein, & Uchino).



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Ubiquity of Smartphone Ownership

- 80-95% of people with a serious mental illness own and use smartphones.
- People with serious mental illness use apps in comparable ways to the general population for communication, social connection, and access to information, including health-related information.
- Smartphone apps designed for this population provide information, self-management, and evidence-based therapies.

Colder Carras M, Mojtabai R, Furr-Holden CD, Eaton W, Cullen BAM. Use of mobile phones, computers and internet among clients of an inner-city community psychiatric clinic. *J Psychiatr Pract* 2014 Dec;20(2):94-103.



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Ben-Zeev D, Davis KE, Kaiser S, Krzosos I, Drake RE. Mobile technologies among people with serious mental illness: opportunities for future services. *Adm Policy Ment Health* 2013 Jul;40(4):340-343

Access to Technology

1. Contact your local health authority to advocate for free tools.

2. Go to Meeting: COVID 19 Emergency Resources

3. Safelink

<https://www.safelinkwireless.com/>

Or call “(800) 378-1684”

4. United Way

<https://www.211.org/services/covid19>

Or call “211”



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Access to Technology

Smartphone dataplans:

Companies like Comcast, Sprint, T-Mobile and AT&T are providing additional mobile hotspot data, and offering Lifeline partners more data.

Charter Communications is offering free Spectrum broadband and Wi-Fi to households with kids in grades K-12 and college students for 60 days.

Wi-Fi hotspots for public use.



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Access to Technology

Home Internet:

- Comcast is offering two months of free Internet to new low-income customers who are eligible for public assistance programs like free lunch, housing assistance, Medicaid, SNAP, SSI and others ;
- No credit check, shipping fee or term contract for the service
- Wi-Fi hotspots for public use.



Bonding and Connection through Technology



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Let people get to know you....



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**Have some fun! Let others get to
know you!**

<http://digitalpeersupport.org/>



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Meet in real time...



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Preference and availability matters...



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Changing things up helps...



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Visual and Non-Verbal Aspects to Technology



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Thank You!

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