

[Home](#) > Chatbots: The Newest Way to Feel Less Lonely

Learn more about a surprising new tool that can help you feel more socially connected.

Spend time shopping online and you're bound to come across a chatbot - you know, that little box that pops up asking you if you need help and instantly responds to your request.

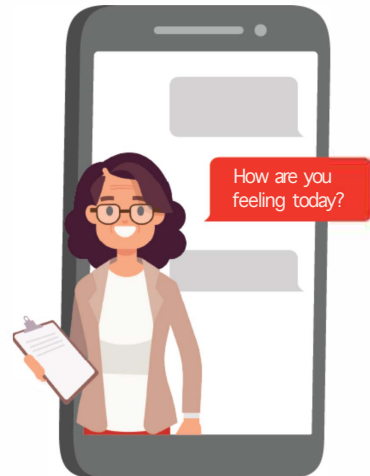
What started as a way to streamline customer service is becoming a powerful mental health tool, thanks to artificial intelligence technology.

Today, chatbots are able to hold sophisticated text conversations - and those conversations can make a difference for older adults dealing with **social isolation**.

Talking to someone, it turns out, is how humans build the connections that are so vital to their mental and physical health. That matters because research shows that lonely people - especially those over 50 - can experience real, negative health effects. According to a recent study by Brigham Young University, **prolonged social isolation is as harmful to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day**.

"Older adults are generally at high risk of social isolation, even without the need for social distancing brought about by the coronavirus pandemic," explains AARP Foundation President Lisa Marsh Ryerson. "Moreover, our research shows that the risk is often greater for people with lower incomes."

That's why AARP Foundation's Connect2Affect designed a friendly chatbot just for older adults. Through ongoing conversations over text, the chatbot coaches people who may be feeling isolated to develop and rebuild social connections.



You can text the chatbot for companionship - the chatbot will check in with you periodically to see how you're doing.

Let's say, for example, you live alone, and you're staying closer to home because of the coronavirus. You might go several days without talking to anyone. You can text the chatbot for companionship - the chatbot will check in with you periodically to see how you're doing. You can also practice having conversations, perhaps coming up with ideas for your next discussion with a neighbor or old friend you'd like to reconnect with.

Or, if you're having a bad day and need more support, you can text about how you're feeling and get suggestions for what you can do to feel better.

The chatbot can even refer you to helpful resources available online or near you, so you don't have to do any Google searching to find them.

The chatbot can also help you take a **quick self-assessment**, asking you a series of questions to determine whether you're at risk of developing emotional or physical health issues related to feeling socially isolated. If that's the case, the chatbot will give you steps to take to start feeling more connected right away.

No matter how you choose to interact with it, the chatbot is a simple, free way to safely share your thoughts, feelings and beliefs - without feeling judged. It's like having your own private confidante. All conversations are private and secure. Plus, it's always available to listen to you, any time of the day or night.

Of course, the chatbot can't replace a real person, especially not a healthcare professional or therapist. But it can act as a helpful reminder to reach out more and connect with friends, neighbors and loved ones.

It's like having your own private confidante. All conversations are private and secure. Plus, it's always available to listen to you, any time of the day or night.

[START CHATTING](#)

Find Help

Search our directory to find programs and services near you.

[Get Help](#)

Sign Up for Email

Join us to receive helpful tips and information on building social connections.

[Sign Up](#)

Made possible by the generous support of:



[Your Privacy Rights - Privacy Policy](#) [Terms of Service](#) [Media Inquiries](#) [2021 © AARP Foundation](#)

