

by [Gina Gallo-White](#) • December 20, 2017 • [0 Comments](#)

“Seniors are at higher risk for depression than the general population,” said Dr. Elizabeth Carr, owner of Kentlands Psychotherapy. “The main reason for that is because as we get older, we confront more and more loss. Loss of spouse. Loss of friends. Loss of possessions because we scale down to smaller homes. Loss of community when we move. I think that part of that is the loneliness of just losing people and losing communities that come along with the changes that happen as we age.”

showing picturesque family get-togethers, the end of the year festivities can be hard for some, especially seniors.

"I think part of that is because we have such a Norman Rockwell view of how holidays are supposed to go," Carr said. "When it is not meeting our expectation or past experiences, it can be really disappointing."

Sometimes older adults' children are busy with their own families and cannot come to visit or may not extend an invitation.

"We are more keenly aware of the pain of that (during the holidays) than you would on a day-to-day basis when you maybe can't see your adult kids," she said.

Fran Randolph is head of the Villages at Kentlands & Lakelands, a nonprofit designed to help residents 55 and over age in place, as well as a retirement and life coach. She noted that older adults can experience more loneliness because as they get older there is the potential of health and mobility issues, which makes it more difficult for them to leave the house.

Retirement from their jobs may also diminish their social circle. “We see a lot of people who retire from their jobs and they go back home thinking ‘OK. This is wonderful. I can do anything I want,’” Randolph said. “Oftentimes the people that they frequently socialized with at work don’t follow them into retirement because they continue working. Many people, because they have been working, haven’t really spent the time and the energy building relationships with people outside of work.”

When talking with her clients who are preparing to retire, Randolph will discuss how they need to think about building a network of relationships even if they are an introvert. Randolph suggests joining a church and/or club, volunteering and exercising.

"I ask them what is important to them, and I help them explore what their interests are so that they can figure out for themselves what they want to do," she said.

Carr encourages those who are feeling lonely and sad because the holidays are not turning out as they wanted or expected to think about creating new traditions and not just feel compelled to replay old traditions that may not fit with current circumstances.

If you have had large holiday gatherings for dinner in the past but now only have a couple of family members nearby, Carr suggests maybe taking a trip to create a new tradition or reaching out to others in the same situation to see if

“Oftentimes when you are feeling lonely, it can be very, very helpful to do things for others,” Carr said. “... It brings us in connection to others and changes the channel on our focus.”

For families worried that their loved ones might be lonely, Carr said they should not be afraid to ask them.

“Sometimes we feel like we need a covert plan, when in fact, maybe the best thing to do is just check in with people and (ask) ‘How are you doing?’ ‘Do you have plans for this holiday?’”

She encourages people to not make assumptions by looking through their own lens and discounting the perspective of the individual. “See if the person can identify a need that isn’t met and what we can do to help the person, but ask them,” Carr said. “Let them drive the conversation.”

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