



Altenheim Resource Services

Timely Resources DEEPER DIVE



SOLO AGERS

with Volunteer Editor: Jeanette Wojcik

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We are bombarded during the month of December with images of happy families, celebrations, parties, smiling faces as family members return home. But for almost a third of older Americans, there are no gatherings, no celebrations, no family members returning home. These “solo agers” have no children, no close relatives who are able and willing to intervene in a crisis and who can provide support. According to [Shiv Sudhaker](#) in a Fox News article, “Some people become solo agers by choice – through opting not to have children . . . or by circumstance, such as the death of a spouse or a child moving away.”

According to [AARP](#), solo agers share many concerns with the older population in general such as maintaining independence, physical strength, good health, sound mental abilities and adequate financial resources. But solo agers are more likely to “fear dying alone, being moved somewhere against their will, and having a court appoint someone to make decisions for them.” Solo agers face many [challenges](#) including social isolation and loneliness, navigating health care without an advocate, assistance with transportation, and securing suitable and affordable housing. Despite the challenges, solo agers often report benefits of aging alone such as a high degree of freedom, making choices without compromising with others, a sense of self-determination and personal fulfillment, and being able to pursue hobbies, travel and lifestyle choices that may be more difficult in a family setting.

Living alone in one’s older years can be a successful adventure if one plans foraging alone. In an article for *Kiplinger*, [Thomas C. West](#) presents a simple list of seven questions to kick off the planning process. West begins with the question “Who will you call if you have an emergency at 2 in the morning?” That question alone is one we should all answer whether we live alone or with a spouse, significant other or friend. He goes on to talk about the importance of identifying local resources, preparing financial and legal documents and have a living will and health care POA. If you are one who doesn’t know where to start with identifying resources, contact Ann Koegler, Coordinator [of Altenheim Resource and Referral Services](#). You don’t have to navigate being a solo ager alone.

According to a [survey by AARP](#) older Americans are generally optimistic about the quality of their life as they age. Yet, the lack of companionship, feeling left out and feeling isolated from others are serious concerns. Friendships can fill the gaps for those who live alone. The survey indicates that solo agers are finding those connections through weekly phone calls, text messages, and social media. While not everyone has the technical capability, reaching out to keep and make friends is an essential step in aging alone.

Solo agers who want to remain independent can develop a plan to cover their special needs so that they can continue to create new memories, reduce anxiety and enjoy life to the fullest. Enjoy the days ahead by developing the support systems you need to remain independent.