



Kindness Calls to Seniors

Volunteer Instructions

Project Summary: Activate Good is working with partners in retirement communities and nonprofit organizations to reach out to seniors who may be feeling isolated or lonely during the Coronavirus outbreak. Retirement communities and organizations schedule call times where both a volunteer and a senior will dial into a teleconference number and have a friendly conversation.

Volunteer Participation: How It Works

1. **Training (30-60 minutes):** Volunteers complete a brief training over the phone / teleconference to ensure all understand how scheduling works and, most importantly, the “do’s and don’t’s” of phone calls with seniors during this challenging time. We want to provide comfort while respecting the rules (for privacy and safety) of the retirement communities or organizations serving them.
2. **Scheduling:** Pick one or more 30-minute time slot within available options that you know for sure you can commit to. Enter your name and email next to the time slot on the Scheduling Spreadsheet (New volunteers: you’ll be invited to view the Scheduling Spreadsheet once you complete training).
3. **Get ready for your call:** Take a moment to read any notes provided about the senior with whom you have a call scheduled (special interests, etc.). To protect privacy, you will only be given the senior’s FIRST name. We will be using Zoom conference lines (call-in feature - avoid using your computer if possible due to sound issues). Call the designated number assigned to your time slot on time for your shift. Our Remote Volunteer Project Leader will be with you on the call for the first 1-2 minutes to make sure you get successfully connected without technical difficulties. Then, she will hang up and leave you and your connected senior to chat.
4. **Talk to your Senior:** See our conversation “do’s and don’t’s” below. Follow these guidelines to make sure everyone stays safe, happy, and we abide by our organization partner's rules. Conversations might consist of simply getting to know each other, to reading stories or the news, and more.
5. **Complete a quick follow up with Activate Good:** Share any thoughts or feedback on the process with our Remote Volunteer Project Leader. Comment on how the call went (generally) and any issues or concerns.

Things to keep in mind

1. Retirement communities and organizations serving seniors can vary widely from one another. Some will have clients who are very active and independent; some will have clients who may be



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less active, functional, or independent. Be ready to listen and adjust your conversations and topics as needed.

2. Each community or organization may have different rules or needs regarding our interactions with seniors. We will note any specific rules below and update as we learn.
3. The seniors may not have all the details on this project (“Kindness Calls”). You may need to explain it to them (see below).

Call Do’s and Don’ts

1. DO start by introducing yourself by name. If they ask you for your name again, repeat it with patience.
2. DO explain that you are part of a local effort to check on local seniors during the Coronavirus outbreak. Explain you’re here to see how they are doing and connect through conversation.
3. DO ask questions. Then, be a good listener!
4. DO speak to all seniors with respect for their knowledge and experiences.
5. DO be patient if technical issues arise. Work with the senior to fix them. Loop in our Remote Volunteer Project Leader if needed.
6. DO be mindful of your communication devices (volume, feedback, extra noise in the background) – Hearing impairments can cause things to sound fuzzy, and hearing aids often bring extra noise into the conversation – talk in a normal tone, ask your senior if they can hear you clearly, and adjust your device if they can’t.
7. The seniors will ask you questions and want to know about you – DO answer their questions to the extent you are comfortable, just like having a conversation with a friend.
8. Do NOT try to sell anything, solicit donations, or promote anything to individuals with whom you are talking - even if a senior asks you about your business outside of volunteering. This is not ethical and will be against our partner organization’s rules.
9. Do NOT share seniors’ names or personal information with *anyone*. Medically, those who work with this population (or in any medical sense)– it’s against the law (HIPAA) to share medical or personal information with anyone, including family members, unless the person (themselves) gave written permission to share.
10. DO report emergencies. If you hear something of concern (comments about suicide, etc.) this should be reported to the community administrator to allow them to act on it.



**ACTIVATE
GOOD.ORG**
anybody can be
somebody's HERO.
VOLUNTEER.

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Ideas for Conversation Topics / Prompts

Keep things light hearted and fun.

1. How are you doing right now?
2. Where are you from?
3. Tell me about your family / kids.
4. What are your favorite hobbies?
5. Favorite books or movies?
6. Favorite memories?
7. How did you and your family deal with situations like this in your generation?
8. Tell them a (clean) joke or story.
9. Tell them about your family, books, and shows.
10. Share ideas for activities they can do inside / in their rooms.
11. What would you like to know about me?

Helpful articles

Communication and Alzheimer's

<https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/communications>

<https://www.brightfocus.org/alzheimers/article/tips-communicating-person-who-has-alzheimers-disease>

Tips For Effective Communication With the Elderly

<https://wehavekids.com/family-relationships/Tips-For-Effective-Communication-with-the-Elderly>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/communication-success/201411/how-communicate-effectively-older-adults>

<https://www.agingcare.com/articles/communication-techniques-to-deal-with-elderly-parents-138454.htm>