



# The Upbeat

Staying Connected

June 2022, Volume 7



To all our members,

To say that the last two (plus) years have disrupted our normal course of living is a dramatic understatement. In the paper each week, articles announce the dramatic impact Covid-19 has had for all of us on our family connections, our friends, our communities of faith, and the new people who may have crossed our paths.

I have watched my own parents go through cycles of the impacts over the last two years of the pandemic. The range of emotions is impressive – from overwhelming joy in re-connecting and the huge “life-lift” this created for them, to deep sadness from missing those they have not seen due to a variety of issues. It is only now that they are meeting their first great grandchild, over three months after she was born.

The science is clear: We are happier when we are connected to others. We are healthier when we are connected to others. We live a fuller life when we are connected to others. Summer’s warm weather is an opportunity to get out a bit more and be with friends, old and new. This issue of The Upbeat is dedicated to re-connecting, with tips for making new connections and for reconnecting with those you’ve lost touch with over the last few years.

Here is to you making your world as full as possible.

**Mark Friedman CDP, CAPS**

VP Services & Operations, Assured Allies

# You Just Call Out My Name



By Dr. Michal Herz, Wellness Director. Before joining Assured Allies, Michal worked passionately for twenty years in the field of dementia and aging.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken up our social lives. Much of the mundane but life-sustaining daily interactions that we formerly took for granted have been lost. Communication too often dwindles to the strictly necessary.

It's time to rebuild! Socializing enriches our experience, making us feel noticed and present as human beings. It's a need we have from infancy, and it lasts our whole lives. Connections can change as we grow older. The size of our social network might decrease, and the relationships we retain matter more. But the need for social interaction itself doesn't change.

Relationships affirm and nourish specific parts of our identity. When I speak to my friend from college, I get to feel like a student again, a younger me who is still adamant to change the world. When I interact with my younger sister, I get to be the big sister who still loves to dole out unsolicited advice. These roles we inhabit when interacting with people from diverse times and contexts help us to be mentally stronger and more present.



Casual social interactions are important too. Short and sweet conversations with store clerks, hairdressers, baristas, and package delivery people may seem superficial, but they help to shape our worlds and keep our minds sharp. Chatting with passersby while walking the dog or waiting at a bus stop grounds us in a common reality and occasionally sparks moments of joy.

Doing something together often boosts our participation in life. We all have a better appetite when we eat in company, and cooking for two usually spurs us to make more of an effort. When we exercise with a partner or a group, there is a better chance that we will actually show up instead of sitting on the couch, and work out harder

than we would if alone.

After COVID-19 we all need to flex our social muscles. This can be done in many ways. Set small goals to reach out and be with others. Think of your errands for the next week, and see if there is anyone in your circle who might like to come along. It might even be someone new.

Take opportunities to reach out. Going to the garden center for your summer annuals? Buy a few extra, add a note, and give them to your neighbors. For family and friends that you haven't connected with for some time, set a clear time for your next call to affirm the importance of the relationship and keep the momentum going.

# Successful Aging Tips from Far and Wide!

Advice for any age from your AgeAssured Allies



My advice, as corny as it sounds, would be to live every day like it's your last and don't sweat the small things. Love big and spread positivity.

**Morgan Pichel, Senior Ally**



If something is important to you, incorporate it into your daily routine. If you want to keep in touch with friends and family, try to make a call to someone daily after lunch. If you want to stay active, try going for a walk daily after breakfast.

**Anna Gray, Ally Manager**



Think about your aging goals (you are never too young nor too old). If you know your plan is to remain at home, then take the time to become educated on devices or home modifications that may allow you to stay there as long as possible. For support and ideas, connect with an AgeAssured Ally to help you create a plan.

**Angelina Portuense, Senior Ally**



## MemberSpeak

What advice would you give young people today who are worried about their future?

“Keep active, drink water, eat healthy.”  
**Loyola, age 92**

“Keep moving! I still try to do an exercise video every day!”  
**Marilyn R., age 84**

“When things get scarce, don't hoard. And when life gets hard, do not be afraid to cut corners.”  
**Janis D. age 93**

For our next issue, we're looking for members to answer the question, "What's your favorite snack?" Please reach out to your Ally to send in your answer or email us at [newsletter@assuredallies.com](mailto:newsletter@assuredallies.com).

We'd love to hear from you!



# The Charm Offensive, or How to Socialize into your '90s and Beyond

By Benita Gold, a publicist, writer, and storyteller who has performed in comedy clubs and festivals.

My mom's exercise regimen may have been limited to a 5 p.m. stroll to the fridge to get the wine, but her social life was very rich and there is much to learn from her about successful aging. Her curiosity about other people and her genuine investment in them kept her engaged in life and surrounded by love.

Many people in their 80's and 90's are lonely because their friends are gone. But my mom continued to make friends throughout her life and had friends of all ages and walks of life. She approached everyone she met as if that person were a book recommended by The New York Times. She opened the hearts of all who crossed her path, appreciatively read a page or two, and left those hearts more loving of themselves for her appreciation.



The Harvard Grant Study of Adult Development, which has been ongoing for 80 years, has shown the value of relationships as a form of self-care. "How happy we are in our relationships has a powerful influence on our health," said Robert Waldinger, director of the study and a professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

Beautiful and charismatic, my mother drew people to her. But her secret was not so much that she was dazzling but that she has always done the hard work of building relationships. This is something that any of us can do. When we display a genuine interest in others, that comes back to us.

Mom was always more interested in hearing about the happiness and woes of those around her than dwelling on her own difficulties. Even notorious curmudgeons fell under her spell. I have always benefited from this. Growing up, the grumpiest shopkeepers welcomed us because we were Mrs. Gold's kids. Irritable, child-hating Doc Seltzer told mom she had a beautiful figure and told everyone else, "Don't touch that Sis unless you're going to buy it."

Mom doubled her charm offensive when she felt someone was sad or bitter. Monosyllabic Mr. Peterson had the only bakery for miles in Manchester, Maine. Customers wordlessly made their purchases and then escaped. When my mom first exploded onto the scene, her ebullient greeting was met with something between a murmur and a growl. She continued to greet him warmly until eventually he shared his concerns about being a single father raising daughters. Mom brought out the best in everyone by concentrating on them.

My mother's later years were brightened by her optimism and hope. Her certainty that life still held more for her motivated her to relocate to California at age 93. That hope also allowed her to continue after the loss of a son and two beloved husbands. As a widow in her early 60's, she fell in love again and remarried. When she could no longer walk, she could still dance.

Read the full version of this essay online at <https://go.assured.care/charm>.

# Thriving at Home after Hip Surgery, Thanks to Assured Allies

When Jani holds court on her front porch or hugs one of her nine great grandkids in her living room, it's clear that this 85-year-old matriarch has built her life around family and the Missouri home she's lived in for over 60 years. You can hear Jani talk about how Assured Allies has helped her stay in her beloved home, through hip replacement surgery and beyond, by watching her video at <https://go.assured.care/h5p>. What follows is a mildly edited excerpt.

## ***Tell us about your home.***

My home means a lot to me. We moved in in October of 1960 or 1959. I've lived here over 60 years and both of my kids have never missed a Christmas. I always told my grandkids that I didn't care who they married, but they had to marry someone who would come to my house for Christmas [laughs]. It means a lot to be able to stay here.

## ***How did you hear about Assured Allies and the AgeAssured program?***

Well, I've had two knees replaced and one ankle replaced, and then I started having trouble with my right hip. Before I had surgery in the fall, Assured Allies called me. They wanted to know if there was anything I needed in my home.

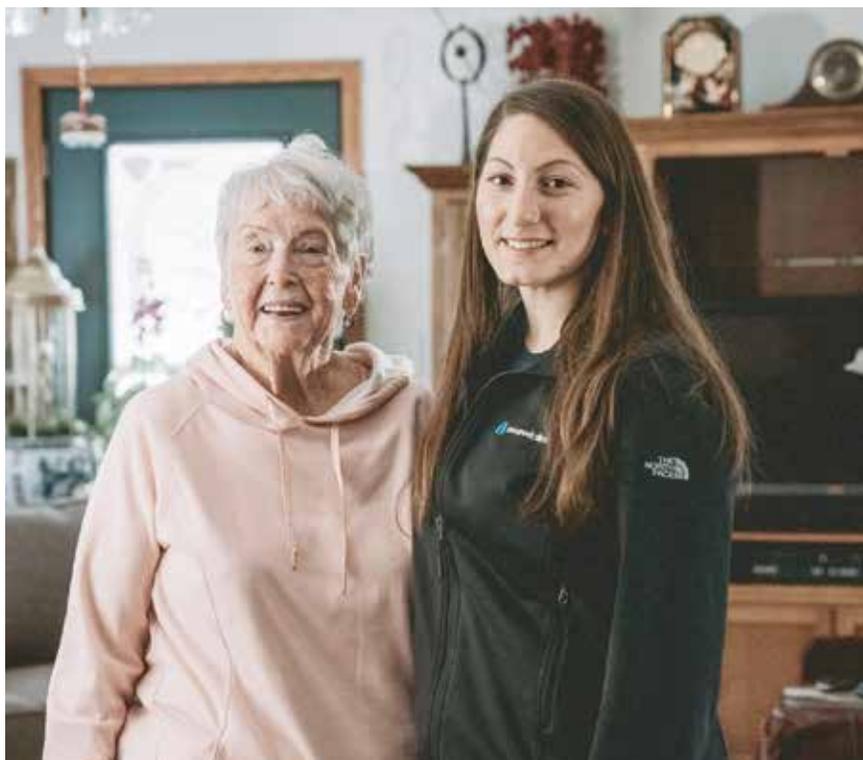
## ***How did your Ally, Angelina, help you get ready for your surgery?***

Angelina called me back and wanted to know if I could use anything in the house. I said well, I'm having a little bit of trouble with my hip that needs to be operated on. Assured Allies sent me many things that I needed when I had surgery. They sent me a little motion light, a walker basket, personal grabber, leg lift strap, and more to make it easier for me to stay home, with no charge to me at all. Angelina's been a godsend; she explains everything to me and this makes you feel good, that somebody else is looking after you.

## ***What gives you a sense of purpose in your life?***

The main thing that makes me happy is being with my kids and my grandkids. That's what Assured Allies is trying to do for me — get my home fixed so I can stay at home.

*Do you have an experience with Assured Allies that you'd like to share? If so, please let us know at [newsletter@assuredallies.com](mailto:newsletter@assuredallies.com).*



Jani and her Ally, Angelina

## Caregiver Corner | Jump Starting A Stalled Social Life



By Katharine de Baun, Content Manager at Assured Allies.

Socializing can be a little bit like exercising – you don't always feel like doing it. And just as exercise can seem unappealing or even impossible if you've gotten out of shape over many years, resistance to socializing can be more formidable if your social life has diminished over time, either gradually or due to a sudden change, like Covid. The ongoing pandemic has caused what the former U.S. Surgeon General termed an epidemic of loneliness in America to worsen.

But now it's summer. A wonderful time, even mid-pandemic, to flex one's social muscles, to stroll around the block or dine al fresco with a friend or two or more. So how can you—and those you care for—revive a stalled social life?

First, let's acknowledge the difficulties. It's hard to regain lost momentum, even when the cognitive, physical, and emotional benefits are known. For caregivers, who juggle so many tasks, it can be easy to let this side of life slip, both for themselves and for an older adult in their care. Motivation on all sides may be low. And, if broadening a social circle or starting from scratch is required, it can be daunting to invest the considerable time and effort it takes to arrange even one lunch date with a new acquaintance, knowing that there is no guarantee of success.

Furthermore, caregivers accustomed to taking on responsibilities automatically in the face of need (heroes!) sometimes try and fill all of an older adult's social needs themselves. As a result, they can feel like they're the only "lifeline" for an older adult's connection to a larger world.

Engaging your older adult—and yourself!—in a social life beyond day-to-day cares is rewarding on many levels and will help both of you to thrive. Yes it can be challenging to get the ball rolling, and there's no one recipe that works for everyone. But keep trying! To hopefully spark some ideas of your own, our AgeAssured staff shares below some ideas that have worked for them:



**Ally Morgan Pichel's** Nana, a caregiver for her grandfather, sets aside two hours every week for him to play cribbage at the senior center.



**VP of Operations Mark Friedman** helps his older relatives draft a monthly plan for life engagement, with daily, weekly, and monthly events or activities.



**Ally Katelynn Dornbusch** buys her in-laws experiences for birthday and holiday gifts rather than things. Tickets to a theater show, an art class, a tea party with friends.



**Director of Marketing Michelle Spinale's** parents say the house is "SO quiet" when she doesn't bring her dog Charli over to visit. Her dad often joins her in walking Charli around the neighborhood, where they often meet and chat briefly with passersby who become familiar over time.

What works for you? Send us your socializing tips at [newsletter@assuredallies.com](mailto:newsletter@assuredallies.com).

## Staying Connected: A Word Search Puzzle

Note: All of the words refer to content in this issue of Upbeat!

F V P F A D L M W Z I I A S T  
O A T E A P A R T Y V N J T P  
R E L A T I O N S H I P N I Q  
I N T E R A C T I O N V I M Q  
P C R I B B A G E K C N J U Q  
U F U T E Z U B E K W C A L I  
R J V R D O P T I M I S M I C  
P S O C I A L N E T W O R K H  
O K A O T T D W C P U K M H A  
S W P N P B M J S I L Q E D R  
E Z B N K Q W U Z F R G M C I  
H O M E T N X Q I N I C O H S  
C Z P C Y E R Q J W K X L C M  
P E Q T G K K M O H P V Y E A  
T B U H G Y N F Y S T O F K T

social network

relationship

home

joy

interaction

cribbage

teaparty

charisma

connect

stimuli

optimism

circle

purpose

### EDITOR'S NOTE

We hope you enjoyed this edition of "The Upbeat." Feel free to share this newsletter with your friends, family and neighbors as well. We welcome any feedback, comments, or questions you may have. Please reach out to us at [newsletter@assuredallies.com](mailto:newsletter@assuredallies.com). If you prefer to receive this newsletter in electronic format, contact us as well.