



Seniors and the Positive Impact of Social Media

Despite the myth that older people can't manage technology because of cognitive deficits, seniors are flocking to social media at a rapid pace. In fact, Facebook, Twitter, Google+ (and Hangouts), Pinterest, and Instagram all note higher adoption rates among adults 65 and older – and see seniors as their fastest growing audience.

Seniors Benefit Socially, Mentally, and Physically

Older adults who have had positive experiences on social media have reported elevated moods. An American Psychological Association (APA) study found that seniors who spend time on social media sites were more likely to participate in activities that can lead to greater health, such as cooking healthier recipes, and finding easier ways to clean and maintain their homes. The study also indicates that they have lower blood pressure and fewer instances of diabetes, and less negative health habits such as smoking, depression, or disease. This is attributed to the ability for self-education on any number of topics, and remaining in-the-know about the latest technology trends.

Social Media Keeps the Family Together

Facebook is particularly useful for linking up with loved ones. It makes for more frequent conversations and helps close the generation gap.

Sharing current photos allows seniors to see their grandchildren change and grow, and creates a closeness and involvement that may not have existed, especially if the family isn't living close by. Video chats also are a great way to communicate in "real time". There is also the opportunity to relive fond memories or create new ones through postings of photos and home videos.

Family Peace of Mind

When a family lives apart, there can be stress and anxiety on both ends. Social media allows seniors and their families an easy way to check in as often as they wish. This is especially important if the senior is living alone and may experience ill health, a fall, or may not be eating or sleeping well, taking medications, or getting any form of exercise. Family caregivers can use social media to ask critical questions that will let them know what's occurring in their loved one's life.

Community Engagement and a Sense of Belonging

Feeling connected is very important to any senior's wellbeing. Social media allows the senior to make plans with others to meet up outside of the home. It also allows seniors who are unable to leave home to socialize online to combat loneliness.

Shopping Online offers Convenience and Savings

Even if a senior can't venture out of the home – due to physical limitations, inability to drive, or inclement weather, for example – he or she can always shop online and enjoy the ease of home delivery. In addition, there are lots of money-saving coupons and online sales, which can be especially convenient and sensible for those who are penny-pinchers or on a fixed income.

Some Precautions Should Be Taken

As a caregiver, you may want to monitor the senior's activities. You may want to make sure that the loved one is not falling for phishing scams and the like. You may also want to make sure they are connecting with trustworthy people – especially if they are conversing in chat rooms and through blogs. Also watch their monetary spending – you don't want your senior overspending on items they don't need.

Fast Facts

According to Pew Research, 59% of adults age 65 and older are online, and 46% of those adults are using social media.

Learning How to Use Social Media

A great source for seniors – and family members – is AARP’s Social Media Education Center. There, you can find out about how to use specific (and commonly used) social media websites, apps, and blogs. Visit <http://www.aarp.org/home-family/personal-technology/tek/social-media-education-center/>

Comfort Keepers® caregivers also help families look after their loved ones. Our unique approach to in-home care, Interactive Caregiving™, can help by keeping senior clients engaged physically, mentally and emotionally while living independently at home.

References:

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