

## Next Chapter Notes

A Newsletter for those in pre-retirement or retirement

### Mastering Family Get-together Stress

**D**on't let family get-togethers plunge into stressful discussions. Try these three artful conversational skills. First, plainly decide your comfort zone for specific topics. Decide they will be off limits for you and avoid initiating comments or conversations regarding them. Second, communicate your boundaries and do so with assertiveness and respect, and while maintaining a harmonious atmosphere, simply saying: "I'd appreciate steering our conversation away from [topic] for a more pleasant interaction for all." And finally, use the "redirect." Gently guide discussions away from sensitive subjects, shifting the focus toward neutral or positive topics. This tactful redirection effectively diffuses tension, fostering a more harmonious and enjoyable gathering for all participants. Hint: Before your next get-together, hone these skills. You might talk with your family members before your get together. See if these strategies help create more joyful memories.



### Holiday Foods to Target Alcohol's Effects

**H**ere are the foods you may want to consider serving because they best slow the rate of alcohol absorption at a holiday party. Fatty foods: cheese, avocados, nuts, and meats. These foods may help coat the stomach lining, slowing the passage of alcohol into the bloodstream. Foods high in protein: chicken, fish, eggs, and tofu. Protein takes longer to digest, potentially delaying alcohol's entry into the bloodstream. Fiber-rich foods: fruits, vegetables, and legumes. Fiber can potentially delay the passage of alcohol into the bloodstream by slowing down digestion. Important! Drinking responsibly and having a designated driver or alternate transportation are still key to hosting a safe social event.



### Slips and Falls

**In** 2020, 42,114 people died from falls at home and at work.

That's more than the average number of fatalities from motor vehicle crashes, which is about 38,000 per year. The most common contributing factors to slips and falls, include slippery floors, uneven surfaces like mats and loose rugs, poor lighting, cluttered walkways, open drawers, loose cords, and footwear. Regarding footwear, the most common fall accidents involve high heels, clogs, and sandals, so use caution with these types of shoes. One of the most common causes of falling has nothing to do with your feet—it's rushing to get something done. Importantly, as we all age we are likely to be taking some medications which may affect our stability and risks for falls as well. Learn more from the National Floor Safety Institute at [nfsi.org](https://www.nfsi.org).



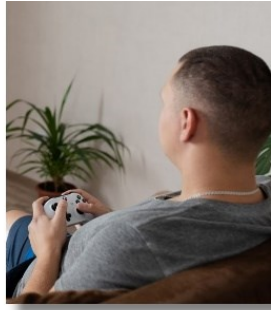
### Volunteerism: The Perfect Pick-me-up

The positive effects of volunteering to help others have been demonstrated in many research studies. These include improved feelings of well-being and positive effects on a person's mood and general happiness. Along with helping others, these personal benefits are helpful for some people who are affected by sadness, depression, and stress during the holidays to reach out. Research has also shown that volunteering can have positive effects on physical health, including lowered blood pressure, reduced risk of heart disease, and increased longevity. Could you use some of the good things that flow from volunteering? To find thousands of opportunities, try these: <https://www.idealists.org>, <https://www.volunteermatch.org> and [click on "find opportunities"], [ARRP:https://www.aarp.org/volunteer/](https://www.aarp.org/volunteer/) or Indeed <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/reasons-to-consider-volunteering>. Or just search "volunteering".



## Adult Child Independence and Failure to Launch

**T**he term “failure to launch” describes young adults who are still living at home with their parents and are not taking on the responsibilities of adulthood. This can be distressing for parents, and it can create marital conflict over how to intervene. Further, it can lead to a cycle of enabling if they are fearful that the adult child cannot successfully grasp the responsibilities of adulthood. Although there are steps along with many parenting resources for helping resolve failure-to-launch syndrome, a professional counselor can be of enormous benefit if the crisis has existed long term without resolution after many intervention attempts. Although mental health issues like anxiety and depression can make it difficult to transition into adulthood, often parental overprotection (doing too much for too long) can make it difficult for some adult children to learn the skills they need in order to become independent. Your path to resolving failure-to-launch syndrome will include challenges like setting clear expectations and responsibilities, requiring that chores be managed, creating new rules regarding financial support that encourage independence, and working through the natural resistance to change that can be expected, all without returning to a cycle of enabling. You are not alone in this struggle, and with patience, understanding, and support, you can help your child overcome the challenge of becoming an independent adult.



## Avoid Parental Frustration with HIPAA Laws

**M**ost children at age 18 are still in the care of their parents or guardians to some degree, but they are adults in the eyes of the federal government’s Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the U.S. regulations that protect the privacy of health records. As a parent, you might be astonished by your inability to gain on-demand access to your child’s health information, including mental health information—such as their diagnosis, treatment regimen, and even medications—without your child’s prior consent. This is true even if you are physically present with your child at the health appointment, arranged the appointment, or are the sole parent. Communicate with your “adult” child in advance to complete HIPAA release forms to avoid being frustrated by providers’ obligation to protect patient information. And while you’re at it, is all your paper work up to date including your trust, advance directives, etc.?



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Helping Individual, Couples and Families  
with the non-financial side of Retirement and  
preparing for the **Next Chapter**

## Could a Sleep Tracker App Help?

**M**any people have experimented with sleep-tracking tools—wearable devices or mobile apps—that can offer insights into the quality of sleep. A 2023 survey found that more than 75% of those who have tried these devices found them beneficial. Talk to your doctor about your sleep quality and follow what is recommended, but here are a few sleep app tips: 1) Don’t rely entirely on sleep trackers for assessing sleep quality. They might create undue stress or anxiety if the data suggests poor sleep. This could reduce sleep quality further. 2) Don’t check sleep data in the middle of the night, for those same reasons. 3) Don’t rely solely on the data—it could overlook other factors affecting your sleep, including stress, diet, or health issues. 4) Use a sleep tracker as a supportive tool, not the last word on diagnosing a condition. For a complete picture, talk with your doctor and/or a sleep medicine physician to whom you might be referred.



Learn more at [www.hopkinsmedicine.org](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org) [search: “do sleep trackers work” and [aasm.org/](http://aasm.org/) [search “sleep tracker”]

## Next Chapter by the Numbers



In a 2023 report “*Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation*” by the US Surgeon General, reports that about one-in-two adults in America reported experiencing loneliness. Loneliness is far more than just a bad feeling. It can harm both individual and societal health. It is associated with a greater risk of heart disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety, and premature death. The mortality impact of being socially disconnected is similar to that caused by smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day. Loneliness and social isolation increase the risk for premature death by 26% and 29% respectively. Research on cognitive functioning found social isolation and loneliness to be associated with accelerated cognitive decline and an increased risk of dementia in older adults including Alzheimer’s disease in older adults, even after controlling for demographics and health status. A study that followed older adults over 12 years found that cognitive abilities declined 20% faster among those who reported loneliness. The challenge is finding ways to reduce loneliness. Dr. Jeremy Nobel has published new book, “*Project Un-Lonely*”, in which he offers a road map for making social connections. These include Curiosity, Make Something (arts), Take Risks, Having a Conversation and Find a Group that matches your interests.

<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/sq-social-connection->