Help Seniors
Stay in Touch
and Stay Healthy
by Teaching Tech

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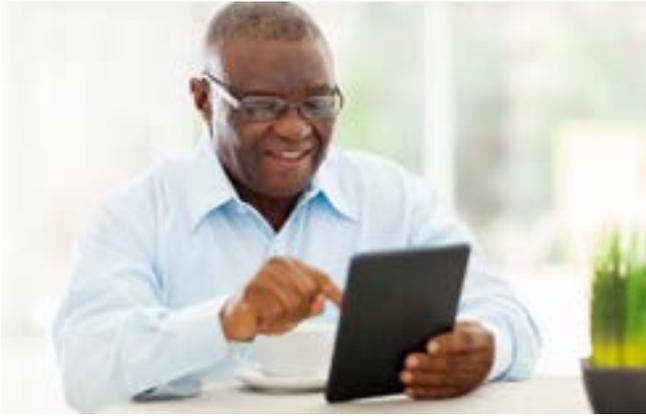
Many of your senior and elderly members may not be able to send or receive real-time communications from family because they don't have the right technology to get in touch with long-distance loved ones.

Not only does technology fight social isolation, but it can also **keep seniors' minds sharp** and help them stay well with health-related apps. But while tech solutions benefit both your members and their families, they can be tricky to teach. How do you recommend and explain these tools in a senior-friendly way without being condescending (or even insulting)?

Read on for tips on teaching technology in a way that honors your members. We've also included an overview of the best communication- and health-related apps for seniors.

Find their "why."

Ask your member how technology might help them reach their goals. For example, maybe they want to be able to communicate with loved ones, shop online, keep a digital journal to share, or track their medications. Whatever the reason, knowing their "why" will help your member push through when they run into a rough patch with their learning.

Don't assume.

If you just launch into a lesson on how to turn on a tablet, you may offend a senior who spends two hours a day reading the news on their iPad. Instead, first ask them about their comfort level with different kinds of tech— and where they'd like you to help.

Wow them.

A good first step might be to show your member how Siri and Google Voice work. The "wow" factor makes tech-learning fun, and seniors can put these tools to work immediately to make calling easier, find information on the web, and set reminders.

Games are another fun way to get your member interested in the technology, and they also help them become more comfortable with using the screen and navigating between different apps. Words with Friends, Dots, Bejeweled, and Candy Crush are favorites for players of all ages.

Go slow.

Using Zoom and Messenger might be second nature to you, but apps like these may be brand new to a senior.

> *"Encourage questions and let them test out the tech while you're explaining it."*

So be patient as your member gets used to navigating the screen. Encourage questions and let them test out the tech while you're explaining it. Remember back to the first time you learned a new app; you probably spent some time clicking, swiping, and opening everything.

Keeping it simple is another way to head off their feeling overwhelmed. Don't try to cover everything in one session and keep the number of available apps limited at first.

Be secure.

Don't forget to cover internet privacy and security. You might talk about:

- How to create a strong password, or how to use a free tool like LastPass.
- How to avoid downloading viruses.

- Common scams, plus red flags to look out for in emails, texts, and pop-ups.
- How to set ad blockers, install virus protection, and unsubscribe from unsolicited emails.

Besides protecting seniors' data and money, knowing how to be safe online will also build their confidence with new technology.

Choose wisely.

Wondering which tech tools to introduce to a member? Here are some popular picks for keeping in touch with loved ones and staying healthy. Unless otherwise noted, these are all either free or have a free option.

GreatCall Link — A smartphone app that keeps users informed about the health and safety of family members with GreatCall devices.

Zoom — A meeting and chat platform that lets seniors set up and attend virtual gatherings like book clubs, family events, and coffee dates.

Skype — Video and voice one-to-one and group calls and instant messages. Like Zoom, seniors can use Skype as a virtual gathering place.

Facebook Portal — A range of devices with smart cameras and Alexa built in that allow for easy video calling—and include special effects, photo sharing, and more. Prices vary from $99 to $249.

SmartBP Smart Blood Pressure Tracker (iOS/Google) — A blood pressure management app that lets seniors record, track, analyze and share blood pressure information on their mobile device.

Messenger — A mobile app used for instant messaging, group chats, and sharing photos, videos, and audio recordings.

FaceTime — An app that lets iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch users make video or audio calls to anyone else with one of these devices. In some versions of iOS, seniors can also snap photos of moments with their friends and family.

WhatsApp — A text and voice messaging app that allows one-on-one or group calls. Seniors can even make free international calls without using the minutes on their phone.

Get your members engaged with technology, and they can defeat social isolation, stay entertained, and improve their health.