

The nursing home in which my mom resides is a very good one (McLean in Simsbury), and I think that they have tried to do all they can to fill in for family who are not allowed to visit inside the facility. However, staff is NOT family. At the age of 101, my mom tells me that she doesn't know who any of them are; with face masks and shields and sometimes goggles, I think that I might find it difficult to identify them too.

As I am the only one of my mom's three children who is close enough to visit regularly, before the pandemic, I went in to read to her, walk her, wheel her around the building or around the grounds, depending on weather, and accompany her to activities three or four days every week. My husband, whose mom is in the same facility in Enhanced Assisted Living, visited both moms on the two weekdays that I didn't, and we both visited the moms on Sundays together.

Since the enforced isolation, we have noticed both our mothers are increasingly confused. My mom asks repeatedly why my Dad hasn't visited her yet that day; he has been dead for 9 years, and except when there was a sudden change due to a health problem, she was not confused about that before.

My mother-in-law has been struggling with agitation and depression. She asks my husband whenever he phones when he will be able to visit her. Last week, he had to tell her over the phone that she needed, at the age of 95, to have a kidney removed due to the sudden increase in tumors in that kidney (they are cancerous.) As she is largely deaf, an outside visit will not work for her; they are held near the front entrance of the building where there is almost always quite a bit of ambient noise, and she would not be able to distinguish what he was saying. She needs a quiet place to visit. Now that she has been without direct family contact for nearly 6 months, we and her sister in Virginia are finding it increasingly difficult to get her to answer the phone when we call. We don't know that this is related to isolation due to the virus, but it seems possible and it is alarming when that is our only practical way to be with her.

I have been scheduling an outside visit with my mom every week. However, last week, after I had told her I would see her, the visit was cancelled at the last moment due to weather concerns; this seemed to be quite confusing to her. Since I had promised to bring her a vacation journal I assembled for her based on her writings long ago, I dropped it off at the nursing home earlier than our cancelled meeting. In doing so, I observed an elderly resident whose visit had not been cancelled conversing with an elderly visitor. Both were sitting under patio umbrellas in the pouring rain; the temperature must have been in the low 60s. Can't we do better than this for our fragile elders? Seeing our loved ones in person should not be based on the vagaries of Connecticut's weather.

While I certainly understand and concur with the preference for outside visits due to protection of the residents' **physical health**, when an outside visit will not work due to weather conditions or a resident's physical limitations, I strongly suggest that the State of Connecticut reconsider the impact on the residents' **mental health** of simply not permitting the desired in-person visit at all.

These people are citizens of Connecticut, and have just as much right to liberty and happiness as the rest of us do. I suggest that when an outside in-person visit isn't workable, a room in the facility with good ventilation and plenty of space for social distancing be provided for such visits. If our Governor is convinced that we are doing well enough in controlling the virus to recommend in-person learning for our youngest residents, then I suggest that we are doing well enough for him to recommend in-person visits for all of our oldest residents, regardless of the ability to hold it outside.

Edward W. Hodgson and Kathleen A. Hodgson
5 Hampton Village Drive
Granby, CT 06035