

MY HUSBAND AND I NEVER SPENT THIS MUCH TIME TOGETHER

Momoko (75) from Western Tokyo (Japan), retired, married, lives with her husband in a low-cost home for the elderly

LOSING MOTIVATION

Since the COVID crisis began, I have been experiencing such feelings as fear, frustration, stagnation, and sometimes hopelessness. Yes. I can't enjoy conversations with friends. We wear masks and avoid close contacts, meaning we need to stay far from each other when we talk. Using a phone... well, I like face-to-face conversations better. Because of this problem, I'm concerned about losing my conversation skills. I've also noticed that I can't think as well as I used to. I can't go shopping, go out to eat, or go out with friends when I like. So I've been losing motivation to do anything. I would describe my feelings over the last few months as a sense of crisis, fear, oppression, frustration, stagnation, as well as resignation. I can't do anything about this situation, so all I can do is give up. Other feelings are emptiness and rejection.

SEEING OTHER PEOPLE

But I keep telling my husband that we have nothing to worry about because we live in this facility. We can get help when we want to go out. Facility staff members do grocery shopping for us, and a nurse delivers our medicines when we cannot go to hospitals because of the COVID crisis. Thanks to all their help, I feel assured that we don't need to worry about COVID cluster risks. The facility director and staff members keep reminding us on a daily basis, saying, "It's dangerous, you shouldn't contract the virus." So I'm really grateful for the staff members here. We are a high-risk group, you know. Another great thing about living in this facility is that I can see other people. We do keep masks on, and we do keep distance from each other even when we eat in the dining room. But we can still see each other because we all live in this facility. If I lived in my own house, I wouldn't be able to see other people. Although we couldn't talk to each other, I didn't feel lonely because I was able to see their faces in the facility. I'm grateful for that.

STRONGER RELATIONSHIP

I live with my husband in the same room, and every day is like a battle because I need to care for him. He used to be in better health. He had no problem walking and often went upstairs. But since the COVID crisis began, all he does is watching TV, so he is losing his

muscle strength. Since we spend most of the time in the same room, it may help us strengthen the bond between us. We have almost never spent this much time together. So, our relationship is growing stronger.

PROUD OF MY DAUGHTER

I have a son and a daughter. Since we are now allowed to have visitors, we had my son and his wife visit us about a month ago. My daughter is a nurse at a hospital, fighting against COVID with patients. I'm so proud of her. So we can't meet in person, we just talk on the phone. Over the phone, she sometimes complains that it's hard to keep a mask and a gown on in the hot weather. Then I say to her, "Everyone appreciates what you do, so hang in there. But don't push yourself too hard."

MAKING MASKS FOR FRIENDS

What I'm enjoying now is making masks. Since I have a sewing machine in my room, I make them and send them to my friends. They seem to like those masks, which also makes me happy.

Momoko was interviewed on 24 September 2020. Her story was shared with us by [International Longevity Center \(ILC\) Japan](#) - 国際長寿センター, member of the ILC Global Alliance, an international federation researching and advocating the vitality and the societal and economical position of older people. In the Netherlands, the ILC network is represented by Leyden Academy.