

**The Importance of Digital
Literacy in Combating
Pandemic-Era Social
Isolation in Older Adults**

**Maddie Szoo
Kathan Ramnath
Delaney Vinaixa**

Presentation Overview

LITTLE BROTHERS

FRIENDS OF
THE ELDERLY

BOSTON

L B F E

1. Discipline Perspective
2. Mission Statement
3. Community Analysis
4. Impact Evaluation
5. Plans for Continuation

Discipline Perspective - Delaney

Pre-medical Cell and Molecular Biology

- ▶ Correlation between mental and physical health
 - Cardiovascular, neuroendocrine, immune health
- ▶ Social support affects behavioral and psychological processes
 - Smoking, medical regimens, diet
 - Depression, anxiety, control
- ▶ Morbidity and mortality
 - Social isolation \Rightarrow \uparrow morbidity \uparrow mortality
- ▶ Access to healthcare

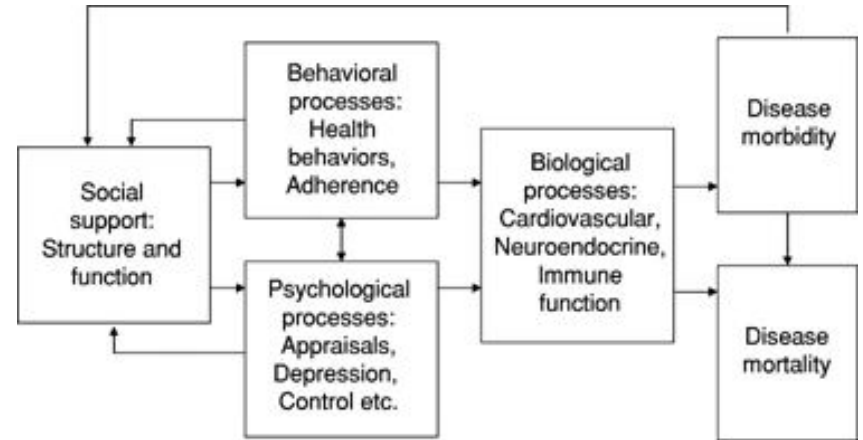
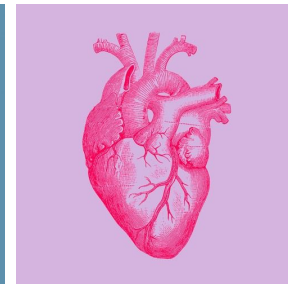
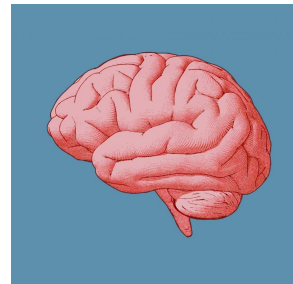


Figure 1. Social support as it relates to health

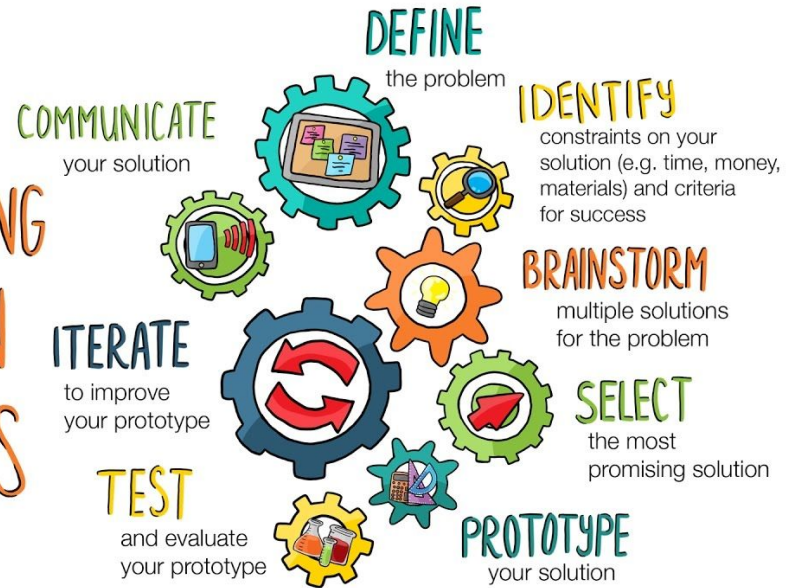


Discipline Perspective - Maddie

Engineering - Geriatrich Market

- ▶ Simplified technology
- ▶ Accessible technology
 - Audio/video accommodations
 - Closed-captions
- ▶ Assistive technology
- ▶ Interactive Artificial Intelligence

THE ENGINEERING DESIGN PROCESS



Discipline Perspective - Kathan

Finance, Economics, & Health Science

- ▶ Socioeconomic status
 - Correlation to health outcomes
- ▶ Financial Literacy
 - Scam protection
 - Access to capital
 - Digital financial literacy
- ▶ Impact of savings on loneliness



Mission Statement

LITTLE BROTHERS

**FRIENDS OF
THE ELDERLY**

BOSTON

“Little Brothers-Friends of the Elderly is a national network of non-profit volunteer-based organizations committed to relieving isolation and loneliness among the elderly. We offer to people of goodwill the opportunity to join the elderly in friendship and celebration of life.”

Community Composition

Roxbury Demographics

Gender

- Male: 46.1 %
- Female: 53.0 %

Race/Ethnicity

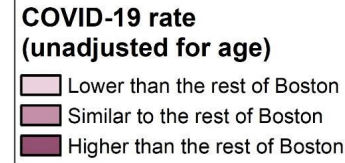
- White: 8.1%
- Black or African American: 56.9 %
- Hispanic or Latino: 27.6%

Age

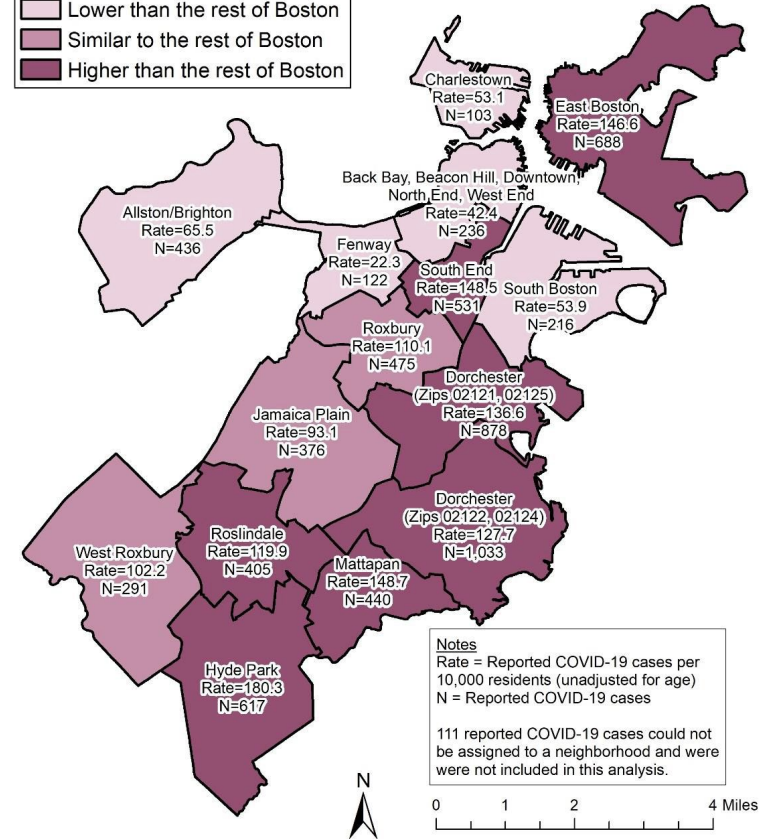
- 65 Years and Older: 9.5 %

Median Household Income by Race

- White: \$48,944
- Black or African American: \$29,097
- Hispanic or Latino: \$19,842



Boston
Rate = 102.4 reported cases per 10,000 residents
N = 6,958 reported cases



DATA SOURCE: Boston Public Health Commission, Boston Surveillance System (January 1, 2020 to April 23, 2020, 4:06pm); U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018 5-yr estimates (2014-2018)
DATA ANALYSIS: Boston Public Health Commission, Research and Evaluation Office

Social Determinants of Health

1. Lack of support systems
2. Insufficient social integration
3. Poor digital literacy



Community Assets/Constraints - Virtual Bingo

Assets:

- ▶ Human capital
 - Conversation
 - Facilitation
- ▶ Available technology
 - Connection to other sites
 - Zoom membership

Constraints & Mitigation

- ▶ Technical literacy
 - Tech Cafe
 - Virtual assistance
- ▶ Digital access
 - Future expansion
- ▶ Physical disabilities
 - Accessibility measures, images



BINGO				
2	17	32	53	61
6	19	35	51	63
7	21	FREE	57	67
11	24	40	59	69
12	28	41	60	75

Community Assets/Constraints - Tech Cafe

Assets and Constraints

- ▶ Grove Hall Tech Cafe, Roxbury branch of BPL
 - Technology provided by the program
- ▶ LBFE → established program within the community
- ▶ Elderly population → disabilities & technological illiteracy
- ▶ Lack of resources



Service and Constraint Mitigation

- ▶ Provided individual technological training
- ▶ Spent more time with individuals with disabilities → ensured equitable service
- ▶ Educated individuals with disabilities how to access accessibility in their devices



Service at the Tech Cafe

Zoom Training

- ▶ Focus of service was on Zoom literacy
- ▶ Taught participants how to utilize the major features of Zoom
 - Joining from invitations, starting meetings, etc.

Personal Inquiries

- ▶ Aided participants with other general technology questions
 - Healthcare portal access
 - Troubleshooting
- ▶ Participants requested help with personal technology
 - Attending wakes, sending pictures, etc.



Impact Evaluation

Informal Survey

1. Have you enjoyed this program?
2. Do you have any improvements or recommendations for the program in the future?
3. Was the virtual platform easy or difficult to navigate? (for virtual bingo only)

Attendance

- ▶ Weekly 8 total participants
 - 6 returning members
 - 2 new members
- ▶ Engagement
 - Zoom: 5 members with audio/video on
 - In-person: personal questions/requests



Plans for Continuation

- ▶ Virtual format
 - More virtual options
 - Plan against future pandemics
 - Digital access
 - Low current rates of digital access
- ▶ Expansion
 - Personal connections
 - Recruitment
 - College Students
 - Multilingual
 - Multi-disciplinary



Conclusion

Summary of Service

- ▶ Catered to low-income women of color in the Roxbury community
 - Primarily targeted groups impacted extensively by the COVID-19 pandemic
- ▶ Mitigating the effects of social isolation on mental health in older adults

Takeaways & Conclusions

- ▶ Lack of resources for older adults to learn technology outside of programs like LBFE
- ▶ Technology helps them get involved in community



Questions?

References

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