



Risk of Social Isolation and Loneliness

NH SUICIDE PREVENTION CONFERENCE WORKSHOP

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1

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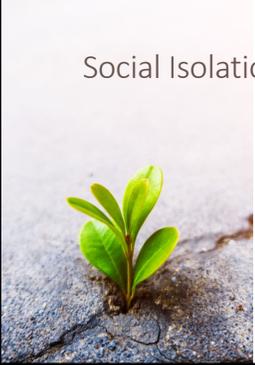
2

What we'll cover:

- Social Isolation, Loneliness & Solitude
- Effects on physical and emotional health
- Risk for suicide
- Interventions for combatting loneliness

3

Social Isolation - Loneliness - Solitude



Social isolation: (of a place) the quality of being unfrequented and remote

Loneliness: perceived lack of adequate social connections

Solitude: spending time alone to reflect and become grounded

4

4

Loneliness

Loneliness can be normal;

*may be of concern when feelings become **excessive, all-consuming, and interfere with daily living.***



5

5



Loneliness

REACTIVE LONELINESS

- Life transitions, such as death of loved one, divorce, move

CHRONIC LONELINESS

- Lack of social circle
- Don't have emotional, mental or financial resources to get out

Chronic loneliness can become problematic and have negative health consequences.

6

6

Loneliness is a fertilizer for other diseases.



Social isolation and loneliness are linked to a variety of mental and physical health problems. From depression to heart disease, these health conditions often get worse when we are alone. Some have even claimed the impact of loneliness on our health is the same as smoking or obesity

7

Adverse health consequences- Loneliness



- Depression
- Poor sleep quality
- Impaired executive functioning
- Accelerated cognitive decline
- Poor cardiovascular function
- Impaired immunity

8

Loneliness - Magnitude of health risk



Loneliness impact on health compares to:

- Obesity
- Smoking
- Lack of access to care
- Physical inactivity

9

Social Isolation increasing in America

- ¼ population lives alone
- ½ population is unmarried
- Decreased # children per household
- Volunteerism has gone down
- Increased % report no religious affiliation
- 2020 - pandemic



10

Loneliness – factors to consider

Increased risk

- 👤 Social isolation
- 👤👤 LGBT status
- 🧠 Mental illness
- 💰 Low income
- 🏙️ Urban environ.

Decreased risk

- 👤 Increased age
- 🔗 Marriage
- 🎮 Hobbies
- 🛌 Good sleep
- 👥 Social network

Factors with little/no effect:
Education, Race/Ethnicity and Gender

Source: National Institute for Health Care Management
www.NIHCM.org

11

Super-charged Environmental Factors

- Anxiety and depression
- COVID-19
- Concern over natural events (hurricanes, floods, fires)
- People driven – “Which side are you on??” (protests, elections, holiday celebrations, financial)



12

Suicide risk: loneliness & social isolation across the lifespan



- Risk factor - suicidal behaviors with H.S. and College students
- Risk factor - BP, cognitive decline, depression, and premature deaths in middle to older adults
 - 1 in 3 older adults report impact of COVID-19 on feeling isolated and alone
- Combat stress linked to increase in loneliness/social isolation in veterans

13

13

Veterans



- PTSD → relationship issues → decrease social support network → loneliness
- Physical barriers:
 - Financial constraints
 - Physical limitations
 - Transportation difficulties
- Perceptual barriers:
 - Lack of outreach/interest from outside
 - Unaware of available services
 - Sense of feeling excluded

14

14

Veterans



- Peer support key intervention to help reduce loneliness and social isolation
- Peer to Peer helps:
 - Younger vets – period of transition
 - Older vets – well-being in later life
- Tend to have distinct experience of loneliness and isolation compared to general population
- Crisis line – loneliness most common trigger for crisis points
- Military culture – changing but still there for vets
- Depression, loneliness, isolation, suicidal ideation access to firearms, and reluctance to seek help – can be lethal mix.

15

15

Solutions and Strategies for combating loneliness

- Talk with family & friends regularly and frequently
- Utilize social platforms
- Connect virtually
- Teach an older adult how to “Zoom!”
- Check in on a “high risk” neighbor/friend



16

Solutions and Strategies for combating loneliness

- Write a note or letter
- Make a phone call...and listen!!!
- Keep physical distance, be safe, be present
- Access church services via YouTube or streaming
- Join an exercise class via Zoom
- Peer to peer – connect remotely for now

17

Interventions

- CBT – (Cognitive Behavior Therapy) – younger
- BA – (Behavioral Activation Therapy) – older
- P2P – (Peer to Peer)
- Outreach

18

Develop a practice of solitude

- Meditate/Pray
- Go for walks in natural settings
- Journal
- Begin or end the day with inspirational readings, pictures, music
- Breathe!



19

19

Websites & Resources for More Information

- <https://insighttimer.com/> Free guided meditations, music, classes, and lectures to help reduce stress and anxiety and aid in sleep.
- Hawley, L.C. and Capitanio, J.P., Philosophical Transitions of the Royal Society B., Vol. 370, No. 1669, 2015; <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rstb.2014.0114>
- Lunstad, Julianne Holt; Smith, T.B.; Baker, M.; Harris, T; Stephenson, D., Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors for Mortality: A Meta-Analytic Review, Perspectives on Psychological Science, Vol. 10, No.2, 2015

20

20

Websites & Resources for More Information

- Murthy, Vivek H. (2020) Together: The healing power of human connection in a sometimes lonely world. ISBN: 978-0-06-291329-6
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2020. Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults: Opportunities for the Health Care System. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25663>

21

21



Websites & Resources for More Information

- Stravynski, A. and Boyer, R., 2001. Loneliness in relation to suicide ideation and parasuicide: A population-wide study. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* 31, no. 1:32-40, <https://guilfordjournals.com/doi/abs/10.1521/suli.31.1.32.21312>
- Willson, G., M.Hill and M.D.Kiernan.2018. Loneliness and social isolation of military veterans: Systemic narrative review. *Occupational Medicine* 68, no 9:600-09, <https://doi.org/10.1093/occmed/kqy160>

22



Questions,
comments &
discussion

23



Hope for these Times

24
