

LONELINESS (BROKEN AND SHATTERED RELATIONSHIPS)

For more research on loneliness go to www.josh.org/mentalhealth/loneliness

The following research addresses the loneliness issue outside as well as within the Church environment. The affects are tremendous both among believers and non-believers and need to be addressed at this crucial time.

The growth of social media and waning person-to-person contact [caused] former Surgeon General Vivek Murthy: “**loneliness is a worldwide epidemic**” ... “**it could be lethal.**”

(Chris Weller, “5 Things That Are Almost as Deadly as Smoking, According to Science”, *Science Alert*, July 24, 2018, <https://www.sciencealert.com/5-little-known-things-that-are-deadly-as-smoking-lonely-sitting-tanning-science>)

“...a survey of 20,000 U.S. adults by Cigna, the loneliest members of Generation Z (people roughly between ages 7 and 22) are evenly split between those who use social media and those who don’t.”

(Kerry Banks, “Loneliness: the silent killer”, *University Affairs*, February 27, 2019, <https://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/loneliness-the-silent-killer/>)

- “If loneliness is a disease, it’s one that’s reached pandemic proportions.”
(Jennifer Wolff, “Loneliness Is the Quiet Health Epidemic Impacting Your Heart, Brain and Longevity”, *Prevention*, November 25, 2019, <https://www.prevention.com/health/mental-health/a29873388/loneliness-epidemic/>)
- “A 2016 survey by the American College Health Association of Canadian cohort of 44,000 postsecondary students revealed that two-thirds of them reported feeling ‘very lonely’ at some point in the previous 12 months.”
(Kerry Banks, “Loneliness: the silent killer”, *University Affairs*, February 27, 2019, <https://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/loneliness-the-silent-killer/>)
- “The New York Daily News (August 3, 2019) reports: More than 20% of millennials surveyed in a YouGov poll released this week claimed that they don’t have a single friend.”
(Tim Balk, “More than 20% of millennials claim to have no friends, poll finds”, *New York Daily News*, August 3, 2019, nydailynews.com/news/national/ny-millennials-no-friends-yougov-poll-20190804-ek5odkrxmvbfhex7ytvp2p6rwy-story.html)

- “A lack of substantive community is a source of great pain for many in modern American culture.”
(Kevin Van Lant, “What Every Pastor Needs to Know About Mental Health and the Church”, <https://www.biola.edu/blogs/talbot-magazine/2019/what-every-pastor-needs-to-know-about-mental-health-and-the-church>)
- “According to [a survey in 2017](#) by the Royal Society for Public Health, Britons aged 14-24 believe that Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter have detrimental effects on their wellbeing. On average, they reported that these social networks gave them extra scope for self-expression and community-building. But they also said that the platforms exacerbated anxiety and depression, deprived them of sleep, exposed them to bullying and created worries about their body image and ‘FOMO’ (‘fear of missing out’). Academic studies have found that these problems tend to be particularly severe among frequent users.”
(“How heavy use of social media is linked to mental illness”, The Economist, May 18, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2018/05/18/how-heavy-use-of-social-media-is-linked-to-mental-illness>)
- “...people under the age 20 registering as the loneliest of all, according to the Cigna poll.”
(Jennifer Wolff, “Loneliness Is the Quiet Health Epidemic Impacting Your Heart, Brain and Longevity”, Prevention, November 25, 2019, <https://www.prevention.com/health/mental-health/a29873388/loneliness-epidemic/>)
- “Nearly three in 10 people who are unhappy with their family life report feeling lonely, pointing once again to the importance of relationship quality. Neuroscientist Stephanie Cacioppo, Ph.D., of the University of Chicago, is an ardent proponent of exercising, relying on deep friendships, and practicing gratitude.”
(Jennifer Wolff, “Loneliness Is the Quiet Health Epidemic Impacting Your Heart, Brain and Longevity”, Prevention, November 25, 2019, <https://www.prevention.com/health/mental-health/a29873388/loneliness-epidemic/>)
- “A 2018 survey of 55,000 British citizens conducted for the BBC found that a third of respondents often feel lonely.”
(Kerry Banks, “Loneliness: the silent killer”, *University Affairs*, February 27, 2019, <https://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/loneliness-the-silent-killer/>)
- “In a 2018 national health survey by Cigna, girls reported the highest levels of loneliness on record.”

(Mary Pipher & Sara Pipher Gilliam, "The Lonely Burden of Today's Teenage Girls", The Wall Street Journal, August 15, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-lonely-burden-of-todays-teenage-girls-11565883328>)

Julianne Holt-Lunstad, a professor of psychology at Brigham Young University, has discovered in [her research](#) "that loneliness reduces people's life spans by the equivalent of [smoking 15 cigarettes](#) a day."

(Chris Weller, "5 Things That Are Almost as Deadly as Smoking, According to Science", *Science Alert*, July 24, 2018, <https://www.sciencealert.com/5-little-known-things-that-are-deadly-as-smoking-lonely-sitting-tanning-science>)

"Why loneliness is so dangerous to your health: Studies show that "nearly half of Americans say that they are lonely some or all the time. Social isolation has been linked to higher risks of death and diseases like heart disease and life-threatening events like strokes."

(Natalie Rahhal, "Why loneliness is so dangerous for your health: Harvard doctor explains the links and urges that 'people are a medicine'", *Daily Mail*, September 19, 2018, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-6185391/Loneliness-bad-health-Harvard-doctor-explains-urging-treat-people-medicine.html>)

"Only around half of Americans say they have meaningful, daily face-to-face social interactions.' Loneliness, public-health experts tell us, is killing as many people as obesity and smoking.

(Kay Hymowitz, "The Role of Family Breakdown in the Loneliness Epidemic", IFS Studies, November 7, 2019, <https://ifstudies.org/blog/the-role-of-family-breakdown-in-the-loneliness-epidemic>)

"Loneliness isn't just a detriment to their social lives and happiness; loneliness is bad for their health."

(Natalie Rahhal, "Why loneliness is so dangerous for your health: Harvard doctor explains the links and urges that 'people are a medicine'", *Daily Mail*, September 19, 2018, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-6185391/Loneliness-bad-health-Harvard-doctor-explains-urging-treat-people-medicine.html>)

"The health dangers of loneliness are not new. A review of studies conducted back in 1988 identified higher rates of mortality, illness, injury, smoking, obesity and high blood pressure in lonely people, marking social isolation a risk factor for all of the above."

(Natalie Rahhal, "Why loneliness is so dangerous for your health: Harvard doctor explains the links and urges that 'people are a medicine'", *Daily Mail*, September 19, 2018, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-6185391/Loneliness-bad-health-Harvard-doctor-explains-urging-treat-people-medicine.html>)

“Despite all of our online connections the average person has 338 Facebook ‘friends’ – [yet] we are only getting lonelier.”

(Natalie Rahhal, “Why loneliness is so dangerous for your health: Harvard doctor explains the links and urges that ‘people are a medicine’”, *Daily Mail*, September 19, 2018, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-6185391/Loneliness-bad-health-Harvard-doctor-explains-urging-treat-people-medicine.html>)

Former Surgeon General, Murthy wrote in the [*Harvard Business Review*](#) that “we live in the most technologically connected age in the history of civilization, yet rates of loneliness have doubled since the 1980s.”

(Natalie Rahhal, “Why loneliness is so dangerous for your health: Harvard doctor explains the links and urges that ‘people are a medicine’”, *Daily Mail*, September 19, 2018, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-6185391/Loneliness-bad-health-Harvard-doctor-explains-urging-treat-people-medicine.html>)

“Recently in Great Britain, loneliness became so widespread that the British government created a cabinet level position, a ‘Minister of Loneliness’.”

(Peter Walker, “May appoints minister to tackle loneliness issues raised by Jo Cox”, *LA Times*, July 14, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/jan/16/may-appoints-minister-tackle-loneliness-issues-raised-jo-cox>)

“The University of Southern California in the last several years has seen such wide spread loneliness and depression on campus that they established a ‘Director of Belonging’ and has full-time wellness dogs that roam the campus (these are for University students).”

(Varun Soni, “There’s a loneliness crisis on college campuses”, *The Guardian*, January 16, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-soni-campus-student-loneliness-20190714-story.html>)

“But loneliness is not simply about being alone. What it really hinges on is the quality of your relationships: The more satisfied you are with them, the less lonely you are.”

(Jennifer Wolff, “Loneliness Is the Quiet Health Epidemic Impacting Your Heart, Brain and Longevity”, *Prevention*, November 25, 2019, <https://www.prevention.com/health/mental-health/a29873388/loneliness-epidemic/>)

“At the Finish the Task conference on global evangelism, Rick Warren stated that, ‘loneliness is one of the greatest problems.’”

Do you think the above data about extent of loneliness epidemic is exaggerated? Last week I had breakfast with two leaders of an organization that gives leadership to 8,000 youth workers. I asked. "What is their greatest challenge working with young people?" The immediate answer was, "**Loneliness!**" That is a confirmation of all the above.

6 Ways to Feel Less Lonely and More Connected

1. "Look up old friends. They probably want to catch up too."
2. "Talk to strangers. Even 30 seconds of friendly conversation with a store clerk or cabdriver has a [positive impact](#) on mood."
3. "[Practice gratitude](#). Focus on things in your life that make you feel fortunate: your pets, perhaps, or a nice place to live...even a sunny day."
4. "Exercise and get enough sleep. Both contribute to mood regulation and overall health."
5. "Take a class. Sign up for something you've never tried, like dance, art, or meditation. Active learning exercises your brain, and you may make some new friends."
6. "Volunteer. It's hard to feel sorry for yourself when you're helping improve the lives of others. Data shows that volunteering gives people purpose, which raises their self-esteem, in turn making them less lonely."

(Jennifer Wolff, "Loneliness Is the Quiet Health Epidemic Impacting Your Heart, Brain and Longevity", Prevention, November 25, 2019, <https://www.prevention.com/health/mental-health/a29873388/loneliness-epidemic/>)

"Three key lessons about happiness:"

1. "Close relationships - The men in both groups of the Harvard [80 year] study who reported being closer to their family, friends, or community tended to be happier and healthier than their less social counterparts. They also tended to live longer."

(Tanya Lewis, "A Harvard psychiatrist says 3 things are the secret to real happiness", Business Insider, December 29, 2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com/robert-waldinger-says-3-things-are-the-secret-to-happiness-2015-12>)

2. “Quality (not quantity) of relationships - A 2015 study published in the journal *Psychology and Aging* that followed people for 30 years found that the *number* of relationships people had was, in fact, more important for people in their 20s, but the *quality* of relationships had a bigger effect on social and psychological well being when people were in their 30s.”

(Tanya Lewis, “A Harvard psychiatrist says 3 things are the secret to real happiness”, Business Insider, December 29, 2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com/robert-waldinger-says-3-things-are-the-secret-to-happiness-2015-12>)

3. “Stable, supportive marriages - Being socially connected to others isn't just good for our physical health. It also helps stave off mental decline. People who were married without having divorced, separating, or having ‘serious problems’ until age 50 performed better on memory tests later in life than those who weren't, the Harvard study found.”

(Tanya Lewis, “A Harvard psychiatrist says 3 things are the secret to real happiness”, Business Insider, December 29, 2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com/robert-waldinger-says-3-things-are-the-secret-to-happiness-2015-12>)

“But over and over, over these 75 years, our study has shown that the people who fared the best were the people who leaned into relationships, with family, with friends, with community.”

(Tanya Lewis, “A Harvard psychiatrist says 3 things are the secret to real happiness”, Business Insider, December 29, 2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com/robert-waldinger-says-3-things-are-the-secret-to-happiness-2015-12>)