

COPING WITH LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

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2 LONELINESS

- Loneliness is a complex and usually unpleasant emotional response to isolation.
- Loneliness typically includes anxious feelings about a lack of connection or communication with other beings, both in the present and extending into the future.

3 SOCIAL ISOLATION

- Social isolation is a state of complete or near-complete lack of contact between an individual and society.
- It differs from loneliness, which reflects temporary and involuntary lack of contact with other humans in the world.
- Social isolation can be an issue for individuals of any age, though symptoms may differ by age group.
- Social interactions help people maintain resilience and feel empowered.



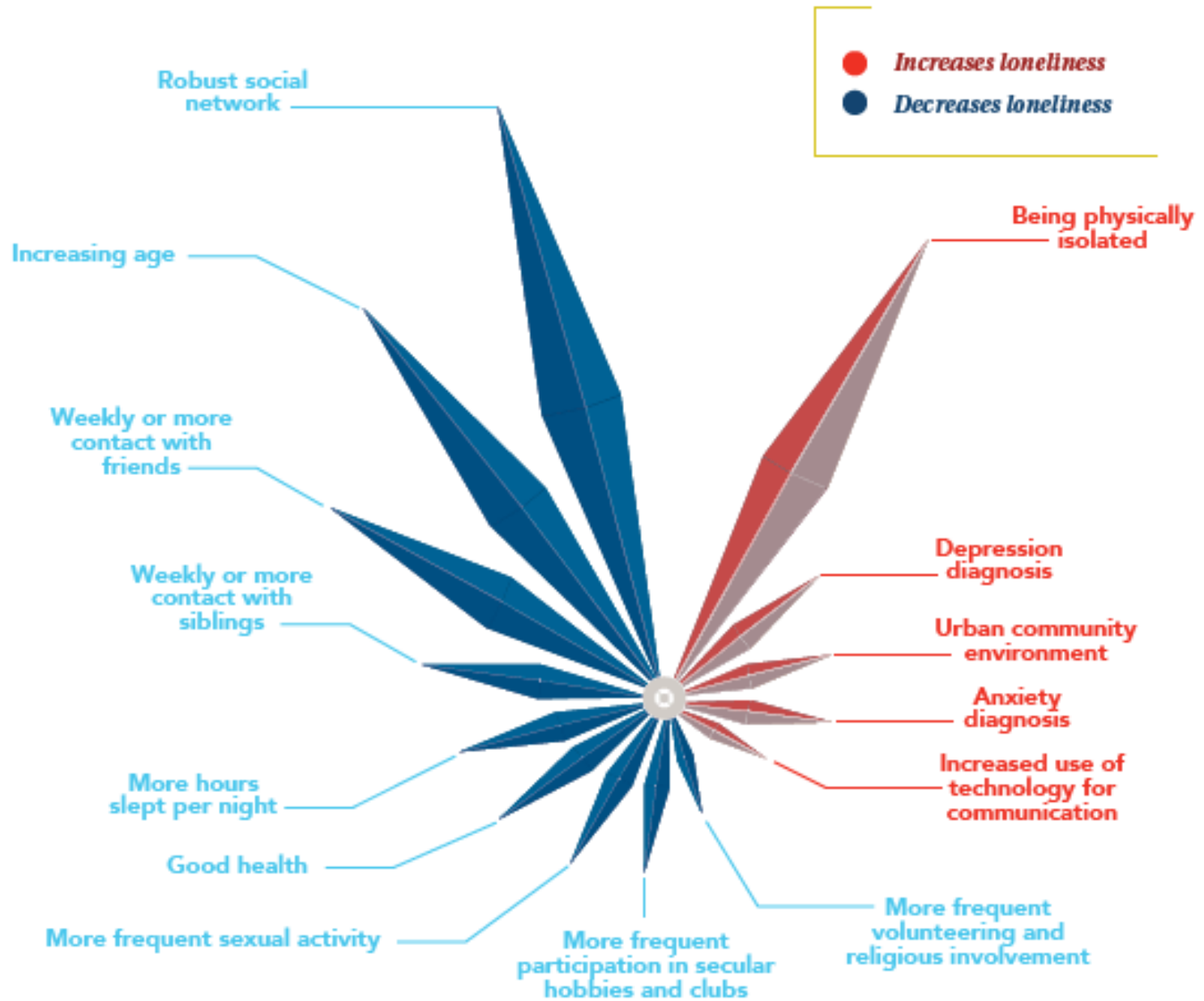
4 SOCIAL ISOLATION - CONT.

- Social isolation has similar characteristics in both temporary instances and for those with a historical life-long isolation cycle.
- All types of social isolation can include staying home for lengthy periods of time, having no communication with family, acquaintances or friends, and/or willfully avoiding any contact with other humans when those opportunities do arise.

5 CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO SOCIAL ISOLATION

- Medical and Physical Health Problems
- Life Transitions (Family Crisis, Loss of a Spouse, Aging, Retirement & Unemployment)
- Living Alone
- Domestic Violence
- Lack of Transportation
- Societal Adversity

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7 RISK FACTORS

- 17% of adults age 65 and older are isolated
- 35% adults age 45 and older report feeling lonely
- 26% increased risk of early death due to subjective feeling of loneliness
- 46% of women age 75 and older live alone

8 RISK FACTORS

- Studies show that staying socially connected can boost the immune system, reduce anxiety and depression, and even increase lifespan.
- Both social isolation and loneliness have emerged as public health issues.
- Studies have found that they are worse for health than obesity, and the health risks of prolonged isolation are equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Social Isolation, Loneliness, and Living Alone: Identifying the Risks for Public Health

Klinenberg, Eric. American journal of public health, May 2016, Vol. 106(5), pp. 786-7

10 IDENTIFYING THE RISKS FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

- Harwood suggested a path forward and proposed that as a society we focus on basics, i.e., the value of compassion, openness, and humility.
- The path forward needs the engagement of family and consumer science (FCS) professionals with expertise and access to youth and adults in local communities.
- FCS professionals, both individually and collectively must become engaged and/or lead others on this path forward.

WONDERING WHAT ROLES YOU COULD PLAY IN ADDRESSING LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION?



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- Personal - We can begin with self-reflection about this call for engagement to address the public nature of loneliness and isolation.
 - Citizen – We can invite neighbors over for a conversation or talk with professionals, members of our community, of faith and/or others.
 - Educator – We can educate through classrooms, community meetings, articles, and other means of building awareness.
 - Analyst - We can provide data to help people understand that loneliness and isolation exist in their communities and engage them to consider the impact and options for action.
 - Advocate – We can organize within our communities and professional associations to collectively advocate for achieving in the area of loneliness and social isolation what our nation has achieved in the areas of tobacco use (Braun & Williams, 2004). (Imagine TV commercials about loneliest and social isolation)



DELIBERATIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BY FCS PROFESSION

- Any or all of these roles could be fulfilled through multiple paths, but this article is focused on deliberative civic engagement.
- Deliberative civic engagement facilitates a process that enables individuals from many sectors of our society to come together and participate in constructive, informed, and decisive dialogue about important public issues (Nabatchi, Gastil, Weiksner, & Leighninger, 2012).

CONSEQUENCES OF LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

- Loneliness and social isolation are threats to communities and the nation as a whole.
- These two conditions kill people and cripple a democratic society.
- Loneliness and social isolation threaten the health and wellbeing of individuals.
- Both phenomena occur across the life span, but teens and young adults are experiencing both threats in great numbers.
- The negative impact affects not only one's current health and wellbeing, but also carries over into long-term health problems.
- Loneliness and social isolation threaten the health and wellbeing of our communities and our society.
- The negative effect includes behaviors that divide us, shutdown conversations, and inhibit understanding – that could lead to other negative consequences.



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THREAT CAN BECOME AN OPPORTUNITY

- The trend toward loneliness and social isolation does not have to continue.
- The impact on both individual health and social cohesion can be reduced, eliminated, and prevented as we go forward.
- To do this we must have the will to find the way.
- Deliberative civic engagement practices, by the very nature of people exploring situations and solutions together, can serve as means of reducing social isolation for those who choose to engage.
- At the same time, deliberative processes can provide a way to understand the extent of the public problems of loneliness and social isolation, the consequences, and to identify desired solutions that fit local situations.



THE NEED FOR ACTION AND INTERVENTION

- Although we can intentionally employ deliberative civic engagement processes in our individual practice settings, it is by working with others both within and outside of our professional associations and workplaces, that we will have collective impact.
- Kania and Kramer (2011) found that isolated interventions of individuals and organizations are necessary but not sufficient to have collective impact.
- Stachowiak and Gase (2018) found that by working together, solutions can come from within neighborhoods and communities to maximize our "collaborative IQ."
- These collaborative efforts contrast with recent recommendations that the isolation epidemic be addressed through a medical lens (Bipartisan Policy Center Report, 2018).



NEED FOR COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

- Professionals in medicine and public health are writing about the private and public impact of loneliness and social isolation.
- Even so, according to Frist and Tramuto (2018), social isolation, as a health condition that raises the risk of early death, is not well known among medical professionals or most of the public.
- A medical perspective is important, but so too are perspectives from FCS and other professions.
- All are needed to truly reduce or eliminate the loneliness epidemic.

ROLE OF COMMUNITY PROVIDERS

- From reviewing the literature, voices of FCS professionals are missing.
- The purposes of this study was to inform FCS professionals about the personal and public nature of the problem and to persuade these professionals to address pressing private problems and public issues that arise from loneliness and social isolation through deliberate civic engagement.
- FCS professionals are well positioned to engage in deliberative civic engagement focused on loneliness and social isolation and to produce impact assessments.
- We bring unique disciplinary perspectives and access to youth and adults where they live, work, play, and pray. We have set a precedent as an association in conducting deliberative forums.

RECOGNIZING PROBLEMS IS A PART OF THE SOLUTION

- We can become part of the solution as called for by Frist and Tramuto (2018):
- As more people become aware of the problem of social isolation- and maybe identify it in themselves our movement will gain momentum.
- Together, we can weave a stronger social fabric from today's dissimilar pieces and ensure a more connected and healthier tomorrow.



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TIPS FOR GETTING AND STAYING CONNECTED

- Nurture existing relationships. Invite people over for coffee or to go see a movie.
- Schedule a time each day to call a friend or visit someone.
- Join a walking group to stay physically active. Include group exercise in the mix.
- Volunteer to deepen your sense of purpose and connect with others who share your interests.
- Take a class to learn something new and expand your circle of friends.
- Say hello to your neighbors. Meeting new people in your community is a great way to connect with people of all ages.
- Visit your local senior or community center to get involved in a fun group activity.



RESOURCES

- <https://connect2affect.org/> AARP Foundation
- <https://211cny.com/> Call 211 or 1-844-245-1922
- <http://contactsyracuse.org/> Contact 24 hour Hotline (315) 251-0600
- <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255
- <https://www.verahouse.org/> 24 Hour Crisis & Support Line I look at (315) 468-3260

**Lord, give me coffee
to change the things
I can..**



**And music to accept the
things I can't..**

*el Pirollo
2011*