
LONELINESS

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OBJECTIVES

Define loneliness vs social isolation

Ways to identify loneliness

Why it matters

Treatment options



COMEDIAN ROBIN WILLIAM'S QUOTE

“I used to think the worst thing in life was to end up all alone. It's not. The worse thing in life is to end up with people who make you feel all alone”



Dave Hogan/Getty Images News

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LONELINESS

- Unpleasant experience that occurs when a person's network of social relations is deficient in some important way, either quantitatively or qualitatively.
- A discrepancy between an individual's preferred and actual social relations-negative experience of feeling alone or isolated even when among family or friends.
- Feeling alone does not necessarily mean being alone, nor does being alone mean feeling alone
- Deprivation in meaningful interpersonal relationships
- *Subjective* perception of missing social contacts or a designated companion
 - vs **social isolation** as the *objective* lack of social contact with other persons.



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PREVALENCE

- Loneliness affects over 40 % middle aged and older adults US
- ¼ adults aged >65 considered socially isolated in US
- 12% older adults world wide rose to 28.6% during pandemic

Loneliness is risk Factor For:

- Depression
- Suicidality
- Alcoholism
- Cognitive decline/Dementia's
- Cardiovascular disease
- Increased health service utilization
- Decreased immunity
- Morbidity and mortality similar to risk factors like smoking inactivity and obesity

Those at Risk of Loneliness

- Widowed
- Female
- Older age
- Multiple chronic diseases
- Decreased mobility
- Lower education
- Lower socioeconomic status

LONELINESS SCALES

UCLA loneliness questionnaire

INSTRUCTIONS: Indicate how often each of the statements below is descriptive of you.

| Statement | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often |
|--|-------|--------|-----------|-------|
| *1. How often do you feel that you are "in tune" with the people around you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. How often do you feel that you lack companionship? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. How often do you feel that there is no one you can turn to? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. How often do you feel alone? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| *5. How often do you feel part of a group of friends? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| *6. How often do you feel that you have a lot in common with the people around you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. How often do you feel that you are no longer close to anyone? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. How often do you feel that your interests and ideas are not shared by those around you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| *9. How often do you feel outgoing and friendly? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| *10. How often do you feel close to people? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. How often do you feel left out? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. How often do you feel that your relationships with others are not meaningful? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13. How often do you feel that no one really knows you well? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. How often do you feel isolated from others? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| *15. How often do you feel you can find companionship when you want it? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| *16. How often do you feel that there are people who really understand you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. How often do you feel shy? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. How often do you feel that people are around you but not with you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| *19. How often do you feel that there are people you can talk to? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| *20. How often do you feel that there are people you can turn to? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Scoring:

The items with an asterisk are reverse scored. Keep scoring on a continuous basis.

Other scales

- Rasch-type loneliness scale
- Social and emotional loneliness scale for adults
- Differential loneliness scale
- UCLA is most commonly used

INTERVENTIONS



- Physical exercise (doesn't have to be group)
- Reminiscence therapy
- Technological interventions (videoconferences/facetime)
- Living arrangements
- Animal therapy (very +studies in LTC even when not a group)
- Counseling/CBT
- Social prescribing not beneficial (not necessarily building meaningful relationships)

PATIENT

- 88 y/o wf widowed h/o oa, htn, osteoporosis presents for regular 6 mo follow up/chronic disease management.
- Lives alone in home, recently self stopped driving.
- Noted 10lb weight loss from last visit.
- Family note some changes in memory: forgetting conversation.
- Because not driving stopped going to church, stopped playing cards with her girlfriends. Didn't want to bother anyone to take her.
- Not sleeping at night. Daytime spent watching tv, reading often finds she has fallen asleep during the day. Out of boredom

**Recommended
move to Senior
housing facility**

**Soc Work
referral: senior
ride, living facility
info given**

**Prescribed
increased social
activity**

At 12 week follow up:

She had moved to senior facility independent. Eating social meals and weight is up

Enjoying activities daily: bingo, cards, coffee with ladies

Family note improvement in memory and thinking.



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THANK YOU



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