

# Social Isolation

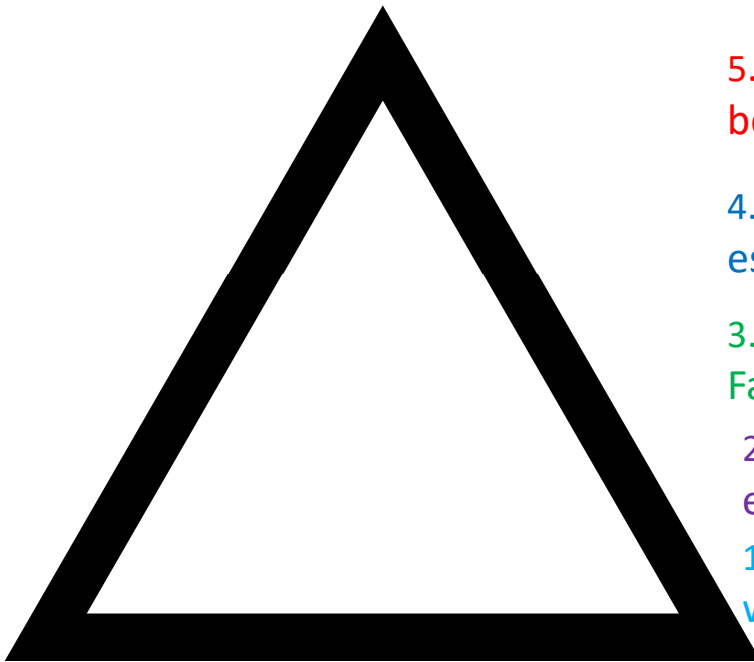
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# Why is Socialization Important



- Social interaction or social connectivity is essential to every aspect of well being and health. Social needs include acceptance, appreciation, belonging and companionship.
- Maslow's hierarchy of needs ranks human needs. Social needs ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> after physical and safety needs.



5. Self Actualization- Desire to become the most one can be

4. Esteem- Respect, Self esteem, Freedom

3. Love and Belonging-Friendship, Family, Social Connections

2. Safety Needs-Personal security, employment

1. Physiological Needs- food, shelter, water



# Change Happens



- The CDC recently reported that more than one-third of adults aged 45 and older feel lonely and nearly one-fourth of adults aged 65 and older are socially isolated.
- Loneliness can happen at different times during our lives. Teenage years, college, move to another city, death of a spouse, family or friends.

<https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/lonely-older-adults.html>



# Older Adults

- Older adults experience many changes, sometimes multiple changes at a time.
  - Hearing loss,
  - Chronic illness,
  - Loss of spouse, family or friends,
  - Living alone.



# What is Social Isolation

- Social isolation is a lack of social connections.
- Social isolation can lead to loneliness in some people, while others can feel lonely without being socially isolated.

<https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/lonely-older-adults.html>



# Social Connection

- Social connection are the interactions, relationships, roles, and sense of connection individuals may experience.

## The Three Components of Social Connection



Structure: The number of relationships, variety of relationships and frequency of interactions with others. eg: family, friends, neighbors



Function: The degree to which relationships serve various needs. eg: emotional, mentor, support in a crisis



Quality: Degree relationships and interactions with others are positive, helpful, or satisfying.



# Social Isolation Risk Factors

- Living alone
- Mobility or sensory impairment
- Major life transitions or losses
- Low income or limited financial resources
- Psychological or cognitive challenges
- Transportation access
- Language barriers
- Inadequate social support
- Age, gender, ethnic, sexual orientation and or gender identity barriers.



# Self Assessment Checklist

(example 5 of 13 questions)

Assessment Questions	Yes	No
1. I live alone.		
2. I see or talk to my family members one or more times per week.		
3. I see or talk to my friends one or more times per week.		
4. I generally have a ride or the transportation that I need to get where I want to go.		
5. I often feel left out.		

Scoring: 2 = at risk or 3 or more = experiencing effects of isolation



# Impact on Health

- Social isolation significantly increased a person's risk of premature death from all causes, a risk that may rival those of smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity.
- Social isolation was associated with about a 50% increased risk of dementia.<sup>1</sup>
- Poor social relationships (characterized by social isolation or loneliness) was associated with a 29% increased risk of heart disease and a 32% increased risk of stroke.
- Loneliness was associated with higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide.

"Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation" hhs.gov 2023



## Meet Mr. Independent





## Mr. Independent

- Ran a business all his life.
- Was socially active with his wife and friends, going for walks, shopping and meeting friends for breakfast at Zippys.
- His wife passed away 6 months ago.
- His daughter noticed he was not eating and not keeping up with housework and laundry.
- He stopped using his hearing aide and friends told his daughter he stopped joining them for breakfast or walks.



## Changes observed

- Daughter started to stop in several times during the week to bring meals and supplies and notices:
  - Grieving, sad
  - Stopped using hearing aid
  - Not eating
  - Not joining friends
  - Forgets to take medications



## Impact on performing Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs)

- Managing finances
- Managing transportation
- Shopping and meal preparation
- Housecleaning and home maintenance
- Managing communication- phones and mail
- Managing medications



## 3 Months Later

- Daughter continues to visit and started to stay overnight a few times a week, she notices:
- Her dad continues to feel sad
  - He is starting to losing weight
  - Has not reached out to friends
  - Refuses to use hearing aids as he doesn't feel he needs it.
  - Forgets to bath
  - Forgets to take his medications



## Impact on performing Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)

- Transferring
- Walking
- Feeding
- Bathing/Showering
- Toileting
- Dressing and Grooming



# Signs of Depression

- Feelings of hopelessness, guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Irritability, restlessness, or having trouble sitting still
- Loss of interest in once pleasurable activities
- Decreased energy or [fatigue](#)
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- [Difficulty sleeping](#), waking up too early in the morning, or oversleeping
- Eating more or less than usual, usually with unplanned weight gain or loss
- Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/depression-and-older-adults>



# Loneliness and Depression

- Depression is a major public health problem that is growing worldwide.
- New research estimates that up to one in five cases of depression among older adults could be prevented by reducing loneliness.
- After experiencing loneliness, the risk of depression persists for up to 12 years.

<https://evidence.nihr.ac.uk/alert/loneliness-strongly-linked-depression-older-adults/>



## Next Steps

- Medical evaluation with his personal care physician to determine if any medical problems and determine if Mr. Independent is depressed.
- MD determines Mr. Independent is doing fine medically and thinks his depression is transitional due to the loss of his wife. He will re-evaluate in 3 months.



## Ideas to help Mr. Independent



# Sense of Purpose

- Everyone needs to feel they have a sense of purpose in life.
  - Gives a person energy and a positive feeling of well-being
- Minimize loneliness





# Ideas to help Mr. Independent

- Wear hearing aids
- Take a walk or do exercises
- Schedule a time each day to call or visit a friend or neighbor.
- Learn to use social media to stay connected with family and friends.
- Volunteer a few hours each week
- Take a class at the community center or college to learn a new and get to know other people.
- Visit community centers or senior centers
- Consider attending a church of choice



## How can Family and Friends help

- Set time each week to call Mr. Independent.
- Take him out to lunch and do an activity with him such as a walk, movie, or play a favorite board game.
- Schedule regular family dinner so he can visit with family and spend time with grandkids.
- Assist with transportation and errands.



## Resources

- “Learn How to Use Social Media and Other Technologies”
  - <https://aarptek.aarp.org/>
- “Doing Good is Good for you: Volunteer”
  - [www.n4a.org/volunteercenter](http://www.n4a.org/volunteercenter)
- “Before You Give Up the Keys: Create a Roadmap for Transportation Independence”
  - [www.n4a.org/consumerbrochures](http://www.n4a.org/consumerbrochures)



# Summary

- We all feel lonely at times
- Long term loneliness can lead to health issues
- Find a purpose and enjoyment each day





# Mahalo

## Questions?

