



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

# Social Isolation and Loneliness: How to Mitigate the Negative Impacts

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In this workshop we will:

- Examine Social Isolation and Loneliness
- Identify Four Ways to Become More Connected
- Actively Engage and Feel Connected
- Create an Action Plan

# Loneliness and Isolation

Loneliness: feeling of being alone,  
regardless of the amount of social contact

Social Isolation: a lack of social connection

Social isolation can lead to loneliness in some people,  
while others can feel lonely without being socially isolated.

“1 in 3 American say they are struggling with loneliness” –  
United States Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy

Loneliness corresponds to the gap between social connection that you aspire to have and what you actually experience

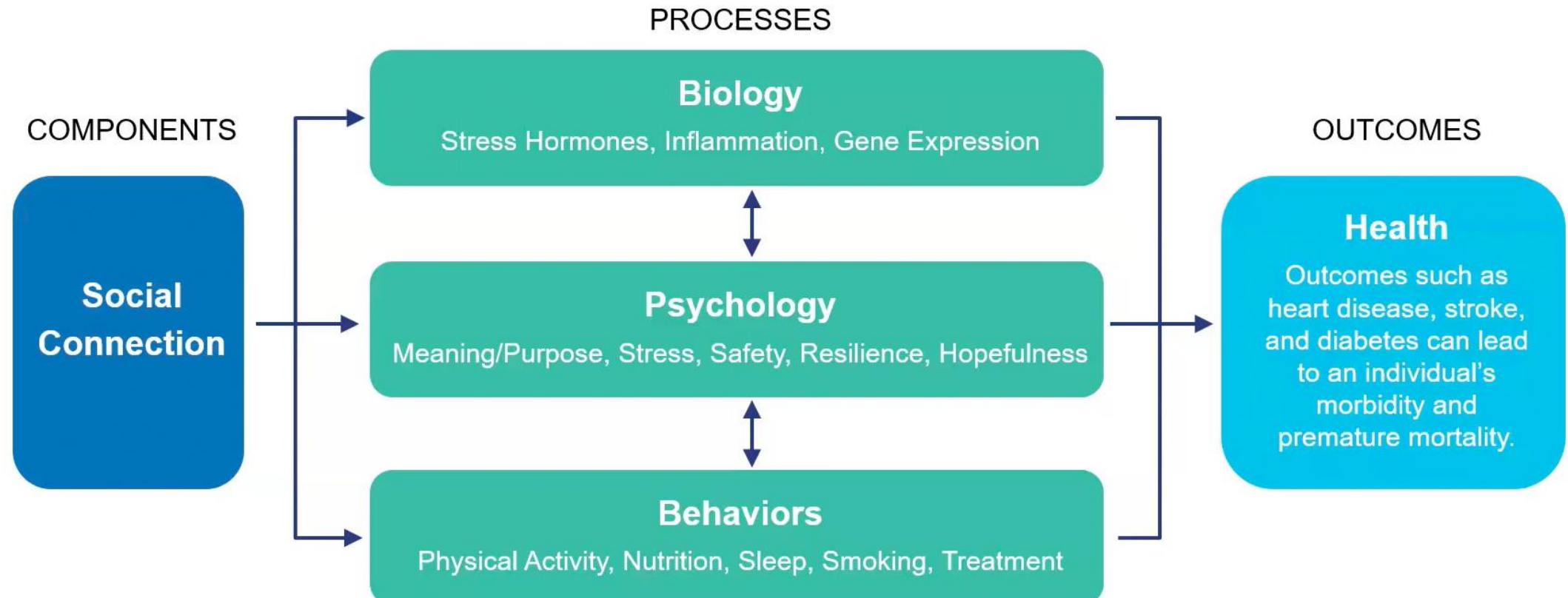


# Factors that can Shape Social Connection



- Individual
- Relationships
- Community
- Society

# How Does Social Connection Influence Health



# Social Connection Facts

<b>Loneliness/Isolation Fact</b>	<b>Connection Fact</b>

# Risk Factors of Social Isolation

- Premature Death; rivaling those of smoking, obesity and physical inactivity
- Associated with an increased risk of dementia
- Increased Risk of heart disease and stroke
- Higher rates of depression, anxiety and suicide

*(Center for Disease Control and Prevention)*



# Reducing the Risks of Social Isolation

4 Ways to become more connected:

1. Talk about your feeling of isolation and loneliness
2. Mindfulness Practices
3. Creative Arts
4. Volunteer

# 1. Talk about your feeling of isolation and loneliness

- Reach out to a friend
- Put something fun on the calendar
- Utilize brief interactions
- Be in the moment



## 2. Mindfulness Practice

“The average person looks without seeing, listens without hearing, touches without feeling, eats without tasting, moves without physical awareness, inhales without awareness of odor or fragrances, and talks without thinking”



- Leonardo da Vinci

# Now...a Color Meditation

- ✎ Pay attention to your **breath**
- ✎ Let's breathe in **calm**  
Let's breathe out **stress**
- ✎ Imagine a **calming color** as you breathe in  
Imagine a **stressful color** as you breathe out



# Connecting is personal...

-  Now...Think about a **person, place** or **experience** that's important to you.  
(Choose one!)
-  Imagine how you **feel** when you think about that person, place or experience.

### 3. Creative Arts

- What feelings arise when you think about that important person, place or experience?
- What colors do those imagined feelings evoke?

# 4. Volunteer

## Volunteerism & 12 year Study of Loneliness

Correlation between moderate amounts of volunteerism and overall better feelings of connection.

Joonyoung Cho and Xiaoling Xiang study

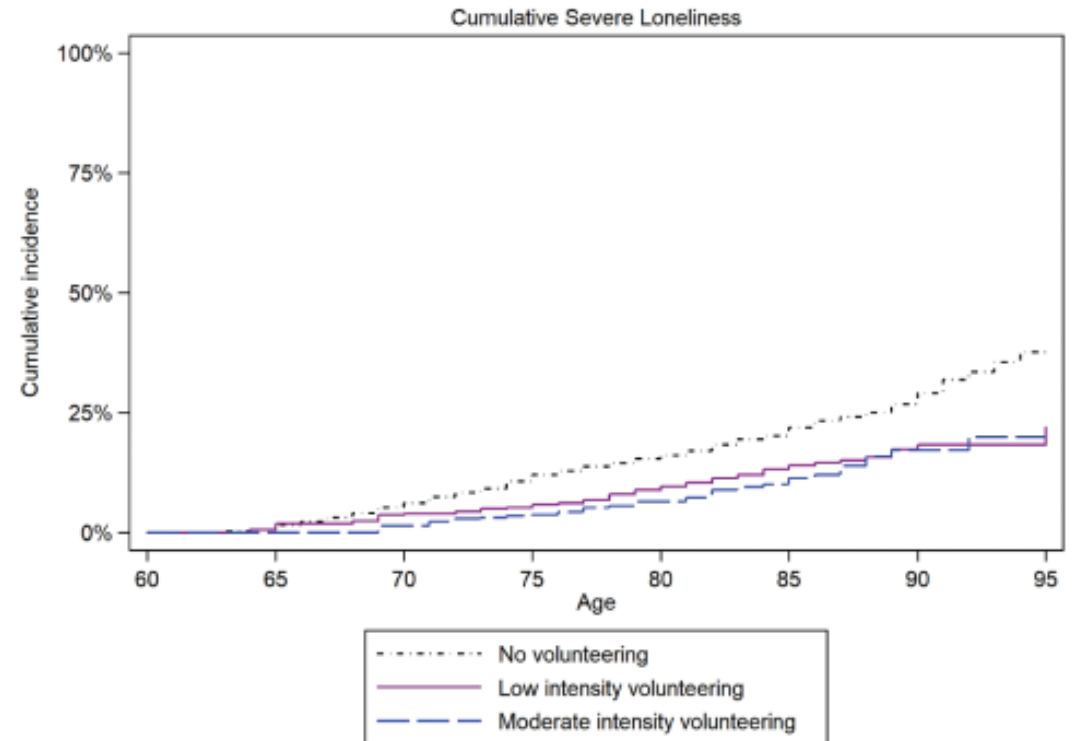


Figure 1. Unadjusted reverse Kaplan–Meier curves by volunteering status. The reverse curves use the Kaplan-Meier estimator by reversing the censoring status indicator for the end point (i.e., from not lonely to lonely). The data points can be roughly interpreted as the probability of experiencing loneliness if a participant has survived to a given age. Age was top coded at 95 years in the graph.

**“Service is one of the most powerful antidotes to loneliness”**

U.S. Surgeon General, Vivek Murthy encourages finding moments to serve each other.

# Volunteering fosters a sense of:

- Community
- Belonging
- Mission
- Purpose
- Well-being





# Parts of an action plan:

- Something YOU want to do
- Reachable
- Behavior specific
- Answer these questions:
  - What?
  - How much?
  - When?
  - How often?
- Confidence level



# Questions????



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Thank You

# Resource

Akhter-Khan, S. C., Hofmann, V., Warncke, M., Tamimi, N., Mayston, R., & Prina, M. A. (2022). Caregiving, volunteering, and loneliness in middle-aged and older adults: A systematic review. *Aging & Mental Health*, 27(7), 1233–1245. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2022.2144130>

Cho, J., & Xiang, X. (2022). The relationship between volunteering and the occurrence of loneliness among older adults: A longitudinal study with 12 years of follow-up. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 66(5), 680–693. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01634372.2022.2139322>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, April 29). *Loneliness and social isolation linked to serious health conditions*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/lonely-older-adults.html>

Dr. Vivek Murthy (Host), May 30 2023, “You’re Not Alone in Feeling Lonely”