Virtual Social Engagement Summit

Promoting social connectedness across ages, abilities and communities
Welcome and Purpose Setting

• Sandy Markwood, Chief Executive Officer, USAging

• Lori Gerhard, Director at the Office of Interagency Innovation, Administration for Community Living (ACL)
Keynote: Latest Research on Social Isolation and Loneliness

• Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at Brigham Young University
Improving Social Connection

LATEST RESEARCH ON SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

Julianne Holt-Lunstad, PhD
EngAGED Virtual Summit
August, 2022
Il paese dei centenari
COMUNE BLUE ZONE
SEULO

Centenarians village
BLUE ZONE COUNTRY
What brings happiness and joy?
• **Homebound**: never or rarely leaving the home over the past month

• **Social Isolation**: Is objectively being alone, having few relationships, or infrequent social contact.

• **Loneliness**: Is subjectively feeling alone. The discrepancy between one’s desired level of connection and one’s actual level.
Did loneliness increase as a result of the pandemic?
Severe Loneliness:

• Greater financial concerns
• Mental health
• Living alone
• Dissatisfaction with video calls

Article


Roger O’Sullivan 1,2,*, Annette Burns 1,2, Gerard Leavey 2, Iracema Leroi 3, Vanessa Burholt 4,5, James Lubben 6, Julianne Holt-Lunstad 7, Christina Victor 8, Brian Lawlor 3, Mireya Vilar-Compte 9, Carla M. Perissinotto 10, Mark A. Tully 11, Mary Pat Sullivan 12, Michael Rosato 2, Joanna McHugh Power 13, Elisa Tiilikainen 14 and Thomas R. Prohaska 15
Health Outcomes

Substantial evidence shows strong association of social isolation and loneliness with greater incidence of major psychological, cognitive, and physical morbidities and lower perceived well-being or quality of life.

Mortality

Social isolation is associated with a significantly increased risk of premature mortality from all causes. There is some evidence that the magnitude of the effect on mortality risk may be comparable to or greater than other risk factors (e.g., smoking, obesity)

“Social Isolation is a major public health concern”
NASEM, 2020
Estimating the Magnitude of the Problem

Worldwide Epidemiological Data

Source: Holt-Lunstad et al, 2015
Social Connections have a Profound Effect on Risk for Mortality

(Holt-Lunstad et al, 2017)

Social Connection: Complex measures of social integration [A]

Social Connection: High vs. low social support contrasted [A]

Smoking < 15 cigarettes daily [B]

Smoking Cessation: Cease vs. Continue smoking among patients with CHD [C]

Social Connection: Average across multiple indicators [A]

Alcohol Consumption: Abstinence vs. Excessive drinking (>6 drinks/day) [D]

Social Connection: Divorce (HR) [E]

Flu Vaccine: Pneumococcal vaccination in adults (for pneumonia mortality) [F]

Social Connection: Loneliness [G]

Physical Activity (controlling for adiposity) [H]

Obesity: BMI of > 29 (HR) [I]

Air Pollution: Low vs. high [J]
What can be done to mitigate risk?

How do we identify effective strategies?
Adequate support linked to better outcomes, but the literature is diverse and complex.
Meta-Analysis

Included randomized controlled trials (RCTs) reporting data of medical patients’ survival as a function of a real-time intervention providing psychological, emotional, and/or social support.
Results

20% increased likelihood of survival for intervention participants compared to controls

29% increased likelihood of longer survival compared to controls
Overall Findings

Psychosocial support in addition to TAU increases both likelihood of survival and survival time relative to controls.
Limitations

• Considerable variability of interventions
• Few included existing relationships (family, friends)
• Few examined pre-existing social connection
Evidence-Based Strategies

What are the most effective Solutions?
An umbrella review of intervention studies

• 211 studies, seven meta-analyses for seven different types of interventions were evaluated
• Interventions statistically significant for reducing loneliness
  • meditation/mindfulness,
  • social cognitive training
  • social support
• Authors conclude: low/very low certainty of evidence indicating the need for future large-scale RCTs

Veronese et al, 2020
Meta-analysis of Psychological Interventions for Loneliness

• 28 RCT studies ($N = 3039$)

• Most common intervention was CBT

• Psychological interventions significantly reduced loneliness compared to control groups, yielding a small to medium effect size ($g = 0.43$)

Hicken et al, *Clinical Psychology Review*, 2021
## Rapid Review of Interventions during the Pandemic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>58 Studies of Social Isolation, Social Support, Loneliness Interventions feasible at a distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intervention types</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Psychological therapies (e.g., mindfulness)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Educational lessons on friendship</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Robotic pets</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Social facilitation software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mixed Findings:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Few interventions improved social isolation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall, 37 of 58 studies were of &quot;Fair&quot; quality</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very few specifically target individuals of lower SES or ethnic minorities</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

• There is no one-size-fits-all approach to addressing loneliness or social isolation.

• Tailor interventions to suit the needs of individuals, specific groups or the degree of loneliness experienced.

• Future research should be aimed at determining what intervention works for whom, and in what context.

• Identify and overcome barriers.
Recommendation 9-2: Given the public health impact of social isolation and loneliness, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services should establish and fund a national resource center to centralize evidence, resources, training, and best practices on social isolation and loneliness, including those for older adults and for diverse and at-risk populations.

NASEM, 2020
How to reduce loneliness?
Try something small
The Kind Challenge
Holt-Lunstad, Lim, & Qualter, 2022

- International (US, UK, Australia) RCT
- Recruited 1,500 per country (4500 total)
- Intervention participants performed small acts of kindness in their communities over a four-week period
  - Have regular contact with a neighbor
  - Show care and concern for a neighbor
  - Help a neighbor
  - Provide advice or helpful information to a neighbor
  - Contribute to a larger neighborhood effort, action, or activity
  - Other
Small Acts of Kindness Reduce the Likelihood of Loneliness

**What We Discovered**

- Knowing as few as six neighbors reduces the likelihood of feeling lonely and is linked to lowering depression, social anxiety, and financial concerns related to COVID-19.
- Performing small acts of kindness for neighbors reduces the likelihood of feeling lonely and socially isolated.
- Even the smallest actions, such as saying hello to a neighbor, increased neighborhood unity.

**Get Inspired**

What can you do to combat loneliness in your communities? Here are some simple, actionable tips from mental health experts and advocates:
We need more interventions that are:

- Rigorously tested
- Require few or no resources
- Flexible
- Scalable

Multiple approaches are needed, so let’s all Commit to Connect!
Thank you!

Additional Resources

- NASEM 2020 report

- Meta-Analyses of Mortality Risk
  - [https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316](https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316)

- Social Connection as a Public Health Priority
  - [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5598785/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5598785/)

More about my work on Social Connection/Isolation:

- [http://julianneholtlunstad.com](http://julianneholtlunstad.com)
- Twitter @jholtlunstad
Adding to Your Toolbox

• Rebecca Levine, Senior Program Manager, engAGED: The National Resource Center for Engaging Older Adults, USAging
• Sara Maloneyy, Program Manager, Commit to Connect, USAging
Overview of engAGED

- National effort to increase social engagement of older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers
- Administered by USAging
- Funded by the U.S. Administration for Community Living

www.engagingolderadults.org
How engAGED Can Support Your Work

- Toolkits and template materials
- Consumer-facing materials
- Social Engagement Innovations Hub
- Videos

- Monthly webinars
- Monthly newsletter and blog
- Quarterly Office Hours calls
- Annual Virtual Summit
Community Toolkit: New and Updated!

- Customizable brochure
- Customizable infographics and fact sheets
- PowerPoint presentation
- UCLA Three-Item Loneliness Scale
- Sample newsletter and social media language
- Calendar of social engagement opportunities
Technology Booklet for Consumers

• Developed in partnership with the Eldercare Locator and OATS

• **Consumer-facing booklet** to help older adults tap into technology to stay engaged and connected

• Available in English and Spanish
Innovations Hub

- Database of social engagement innovations to facilitate shared learning and replication
- Summaries are added on an ongoing basis
- Consider submitting your programs with us!

www.engagingolderadults.org/hub
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caring Together, Living Better</th>
<th>Friendly Phone Calling</th>
<th>ONEgeneration Letters to Older Adults</th>
<th>COAST-IT (Connecting Older Adults)</th>
<th>Fairfax County Virtual Cent...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ORGANIZATION NAME</strong></td>
<td>Decatur Catholic Charities – Faith in...</td>
<td>University of Colorado Anschutz Mu...</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fairfax County Department of Neig...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CITY, STATE</strong></td>
<td>Decatur, IL</td>
<td>Van Nuys, CA</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fairfax, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BRIEF DESCRIPTION</strong></td>
<td>Older adults who are homebound received phone calls from friendly volunteers.</td>
<td>This letter writing program allows older adults and students to connect without using technology.</td>
<td>Pairs college students studying health with older adults for intergenerational social phone calls.</td>
<td>Virtual senior center developed in response to closures of in-person senior centers and adult day health centers due to the COVID-19...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTERVENTION TYPE</strong></td>
<td>Intergenerational</td>
<td>Intergenerational</td>
<td>Arts and Creative Expression</td>
<td>Health and Wellness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POPULATION SERVED</strong></td>
<td>Older Adults</td>
<td>Older Adults</td>
<td>Older Adults</td>
<td>Older Adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GEOGRAPHIC POPULATION SERVED</strong></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rural, Frontier, Suburban, Urban</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ORGANIZATION TYPE</strong></td>
<td>Area Agency on Aging</td>
<td>Aging Services Provider</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Senior Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PARTNERS INVOLVED</strong></td>
<td>Aging and Disability Resource Ce...</td>
<td>Area Agency on Aging, Faith-base</td>
<td>Aging and Disability Resource Ce...</td>
<td>Aging and Disability Resource Ce...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FUNDING SOURCE</strong></td>
<td>Private/philanthropic grant</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Private/philanthropic grant</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DESCRIPTION</strong></td>
<td>Faith in Action of Macon County provides friendly phone calling</td>
<td>Program Description</td>
<td>Program Description</td>
<td>Program Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Health and Wellness</td>
<td>Health and Wellness</td>
<td>At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, senior centers, adult day care...</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Best Practices Publications

- Two best practices publications
- Highlights 22 Aging Network social engagement best practices programs
Virtual Programming Manual

• Focused on virtual programming

• **Manual** includes key considerations, organizational tips and best practices for developing and administering virtual programs
Webinars and Office Hours

- Volunteer engagement
- Caregivers
- Creative engagement
- Serving Native American, AAPI, LGBTQ and Hispanic and Latino older adults
- Rural engagement
- Holiday engagement

- Lifelong learning
- Senior housing
- Nutrition
- Partnering with libraries, faith-based groups and parks and rec
- Technology
- Senior Centers
Connect With Us!

- [www.engagingolderadults.org](http://www.engagingolderadults.org)
- Facebook: [@engAGEDCenter](https://www.facebook.com/engAGEDCenter)
- Twitter: [@engAGEDCenter](https://twitter.com/engAGEDCenter)
- [info@engagingolderadults.org](mailto:info@engagingolderadults.org)
• Planning underway in 2020, with launch in 2021
• Funded by ACL
• USAging recently announced as the Coordinating Center
• Advisory group members include:
  • National Indian Council on Aging, National Council on Aging, Meals on Wheels America, Advancing States, USAging, Foundation for Social Connection, AARP Foundation
• Fostering a nationwide network of champions who are committed to addressing social isolation and loneliness
  • Online discussions and resource sharing
  • Communities of Practice
  • Peer networking opportunities
Nationwide Network of Champions

• Passionate leaders and innovators at the local, state and national level dedicated to ending social isolation and loneliness.

• **Joining the Commit to Connect Nationwide Network of Champions includes three steps:**
  
  • Review, complete and submit the brief registration form.
  
  • You’ll receive an email that confirms receipt of the application.
  
  • Once the application is approved and processed, new champions will receive an email with access to the online network hub.
Other Commit to Connect Resources

• Sign up for our monthly newsletter: https://committoconnect.org/

• Online social isolation screening tool (U-SIRS)

• Intergenerational Literature Review

• Community of Practice opportunities

• Upcoming:
  • Topical Guides on topics like intergenerational engagement, supporting people living with dementia and more
Connect With Us!

engAGED
Website: www.engagingolderadults.org
Email: info@engagingolderadults.org
Facebook: @engAGEDCenter
Twitter: @engAGEDCenter

Commit to Connect
Website: www.committoconnect.org
Email: info@committoconnect.org
Research and Practice Panel: Intergenerational Engagement
Research and Practice Panel: Intergenerational Engagement

• Donna Butts, Executive Director at Generations United (Moderator)
• Shannon Jarrott, Ph.D., Professor of Social Work, The Ohio State University
• Mary Click, National Intergenerational Tutoring Director, The Oasis Institute
• Kelly Dearman, Executive Director, San Francisco Department of Disability and Aging Services
• Stephanie Cole, Special Assistant to the Secretary & Director of Special Projects, Pennsylvania Department of Aging
• Elizabeth "Like" Lokon, MGS, Ph.D., Founder/Director, Opening Minds through Art (OMA), Scripps Gerontology Center at Miami University
Wrap Up and Next Day Preview

• Meredith Hanley, Director of Community Capacity Building, USAging
Join Us Tomorrow

• Keynote: Intersection Between Social Isolation and Equity
• Research Panel: Social Engagement and Equity Issues
• Practice Panel: Social Engagement and Equity Issues
• Call to Action and Wrap Up
Thank you for participating in the Virtual Social Engagement Summit!