The Impact of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Later Life

Misty Boldt, LMSW
Elder Abuse Prevention Program Social Worker & Ursula Forum Domestic Violence Fellow
Learning Objectives

• Learning meaning and forms of loneliness and isolation.
• Understanding the impact of loneliness and isolation on the aging population.
• Identifying the importance of this information to our communities and agencies.
• Learn to identify loneliness and isolation factors in the aging population.
• Available resources to assist lonely and isolated older adults.
Loneliness

• A state of solitude or being alone.

• Being without company; cut off from others.
  (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

• A complex and usually unpleasant emotional response to isolation; typically includes anxious feelings about a lack of connection or communication with other beings.
  (Wikipedia)
Forms of Loneliness

• Three Types of Loneliness per to causation:
  • Situational:
    • Socio-economic and cultural social environments contribute to situational loneliness. Environmental factors like unpleasant experiences, differences between levels of need and social contacts, migration of population, interpersonal conflicts, accidents, disasters, etc., lead to loneliness in later life.
  • Developmental:
    • Feelings of personal inadequacies, developmental deficits, significant separations, social in-equality, poverty, living arrangements, and physical/psychological disabilities often lead to developmental loneliness.
  • Internal:
    • Being alone does not essentially make a person lonely. It is the perception of being alone which makes the person lonely. People with low self-esteem and less self-worth are seen to feel lonelier than their counterparts. Reasons for this type of loneliness are personality factors, perceptions of what is in their control, mental distress, low self-esteem, feeling of guilt or worthlessness, and poor coping strategies with situations.

(Tiwari, Sarvada Chandra, 2013)
Isolation

• The state from being isolated from others.
  
  (Psychology Dictionary)

• The complete separation from others.
  
  (Dictionary.com)

• Solitude is the state of being isolated or secluded; lack of contact with people.
  
  (Wikipedia)
Forms of Isolation

• Social Isolation

• Isolation for the purpose of abuse

• Medical isolation – disease control, prevention

• Psychological isolation – defense mechanism

• Solitary confinement
Hierarchy of Needs

- Physiological needs: food, water, warmth, rest
- Safety needs: security, safety
- Belongingness and love needs: intimate relationships, friends
- Esteem needs: prestige and feeling of accomplishment
- Self-actualization: achieving one’s full potential, including creative activities
- Self-fulfillment needs
Impact of Loneliness of the Aging Population

• Higher mortality rates:
  • People affected by extreme loneliness are 14% more likely to die a premature death per the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Study, 2012 (PNAS).
  • Older adults are more likely to report poor physical and/or mental health. (U.S National Social Life, Health, and Aging Project)

• Long-term Illness:
  • 60% older adults overuse emergency rooms due to loneliness. (www.myagedcare.gov.edu)
  • Higher instance of chronic lung disease, arthritis, impaired mobility, high blood pressure and depression per the PNAS study of 2012.

• Cognitive decline & risk of dementia:
  • Feelings of loneliness are linked to poor cognitive performance, quicker cognitive decline, and increased risk of dementia. (U.S Senior Blog, Dr. John Cacioppo)
Impact of Loneliness Continued

• Depression & pessimism:
  • Increased symptoms in middle-aged and older adults.

• Long-term care:
  • Loneliness and social isolation are major predictors for older adults requiring home care, and entering nursing homes. (Canadian’s, Women’s and Seniors Health Branch Report)

• Unhealthy behavior:
  • More likely to report risky health behaviors like poor diet, no physical activity, and smoking. (English Longitudinal Study of Aging)
Age Waive

- Between 2014 and 2060 older adults that are non-Hispanic white are projected to drop from 78.3% to 54.6%.

- Currently almost 1 in 10 people are over 60 years old, by 2050 1 in 5 people will be over 60 years old.

- By 2050 Americans ages 65 and older are projected to double from 48 million to over 88 million.

- By 2050, global life expectancy at birth is projected to increase by almost eight years, climbing from 68.6 years in 2015 to 76.2 years in 2050.

- The global population of the “oldest old” — people aged 80 and older — is expected to more than triple between 2015 and 2050, growing from 126.5 million to 446.6 million. The oldest old population in some Asian and Latin American countries is predicted to quadruple by 2050.

Identifying Factors of Loneliness & Isolation

- Living alone
- Recent loss/bereavement
- Chronic or acute illness
- Mobility
- Sensory Impairments (sight/hearing)
- How often the person leaves their home
- Whether close family lives near by
- Rural vs Suburban vs Urban
Silverline NY Pilot

• Program Overview:
  • Silverline NY is a phone based program designed to help older adults who may be feeling lonely or isolated. Participants will be matched with a volunteer who will provide friendly calls weekly

• Counties Served:
  • Primarily Monroe and Livingston, however will not turn people away

• Criteria:
  • Over 60 years old, wants to receive a friendly call

• Referral Process:
  • Provide clients with hotline number: (585)498-4040

**The hotline is active between 12 pm and 12 am. If client’s call outside of this time frame, they will receive a message instructing them to call back during business hours**
Ursula Forum Domestic Violence Grant

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• Mental & Emotional Health
  • Trauma fog mimics dementia

• Physiology
  • Vagus Nerve

• Trauma across the lifespan:
  • Adverse Childhood Events Study & Life Events Screening Tool
Who Can You Contact for Assistance?

• [https://www.orangecountygov.com/151/Aging](https://www.orangecountygov.com/151/Aging)

• Silverline NY

• Local Senior Centers

• YMCAs

• Religious Communities

• Community Volunteers
Resources

  
  What is ISOLATION? definition of ISOLATION (Psychology Dictionary)
