

Understanding Social Isolation and Loneliness



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Today's Presenter



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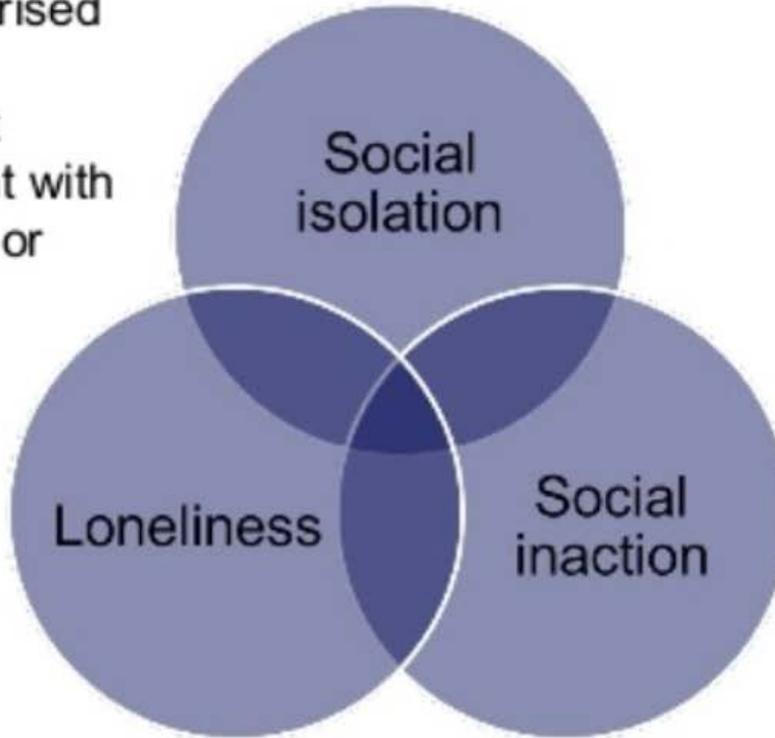
Overview

- Definitions
- Loneliness
- Social Isolation
- Additional Considerations
- Improving Social Connectedness and Support

Social Isolation, Loneliness, and Social Inaction

Social isolation is characterised by an absence of social interactions, social support structures and engagement with wider community activities or structures.

Loneliness describes an individual's personal, subjective sense of lacking connection and contact with social interactions to the extent that they are wanted or needed.



Social inaction describes a state where individuals choose, or unable, to take part in in social action and are disconnected from concepts of 'we-ness' and civic society

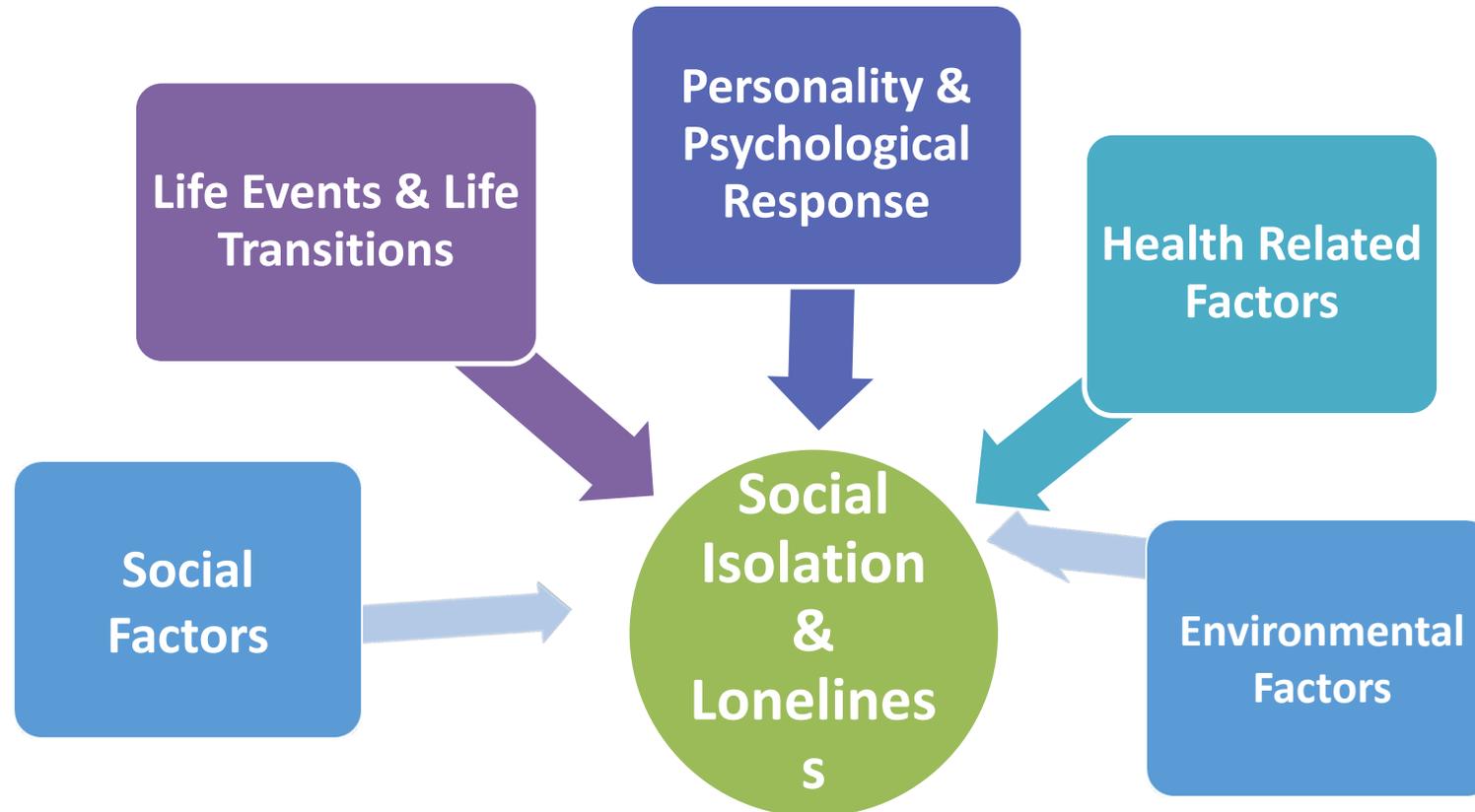
Varney J. Social Isolation from a public health perspective. 2013.

Loneliness vs. Social Isolation

Loneliness	Social Isolation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Subjective ▪ Quality, quantity, frequency of social interactions with people in one's social networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Objective ▪ Appraisal of number of people in social networks + frequency of social interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feelings of being separated from/ isolated from others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of contact with other individuals (situational or <i>infrequency</i> of social interactions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discrepancy between desired relationships and actual relationships 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Qualitative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quantifiable

Abramson T. Social Isolation & Loneliness: Impact on Physical and Mental Health. 2018.

Factors Related to Social Isolation & Loneliness



Abramson T. Social Isolation & Loneliness: Impact on Physical and Mental Health. 2018.

Loneliness



The Lonely Brain and Inflammation



Loneliness is...

- As bad for you as smoking 15 cigarettes a day
- Worse for you than obesity
- As much of a health risk as having an alcohol use disorder
- Likely to increase risk of death by at least 29%



Abramson T. Social Isolation & Loneliness: Impact on Physical and Mental Health. 2018.

Impacts of Loneliness

- Associations with...
 - Life satisfaction
 - Substance use
 - Suicide
 - Physical illness



Social Isolation

- Involuntary, created, or imposed
- Linked to an event, disease, or behavior
- Lack of a personal social network

Impacts of Social Isolation

- Evidence from animal studies
- Evidence from human research



Varney J. Social Isolation from a public health perspective. 2013.

Additional Considerations



Socially Connected People Live Longer

- Holt-Lunstad's often-cited landmark study of three groups...
 - Those who were socially isolated from other people
 - Those who described themselves as very lonely
 - Those who lived alone

Therapeutic Supports and Interventions



Group-based programs



Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)



Medications

Improving Social Connectedness



- Volunteering, befriending, friendly visiting, home visiting
- Clinical services to homebound
- Healthcare initiatives and telehealth
- Cohousing

Improving Social Connectedness

- Community and social groups
- Having a religious affiliation
- Institutional connections
- School Culture



Improving Social Connectedness



- Bumping Spaces
- Pets
- Warm-lines
- Use of other technology

Thank you!

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