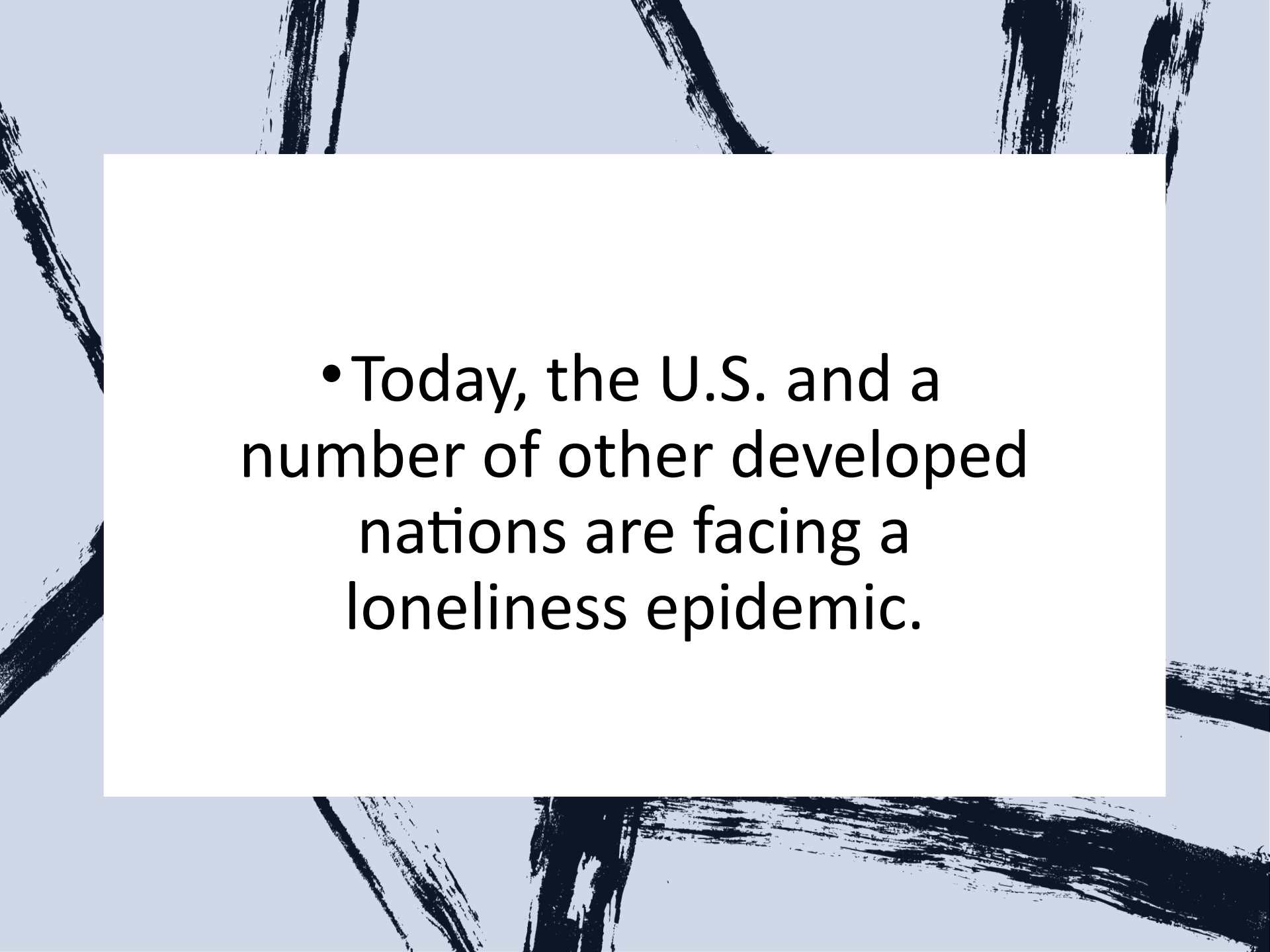


Loneliness and Isolation



The Silent Epidemic

- 
- Today, the U.S. and a number of other developed nations are facing a loneliness epidemic.

“Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation has been an underappreciated public health crisis that has harmed individual and societal health. Our relationships are a source of healing and well-being hiding in plain site- one that can help us live healthier, more fulfilled, and productive lives.”

U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy

Epidemic of Loneliness- Cigna Study


“According to a Cigna study, more than half of U.S. adults (58%) are considered lonely. This is fairly consistent with pre-pandemic research that showed 61% of adults experiencing loneliness in 2019, after a seven-percentage point increase from 2018.”

Agenda

- Loneliness defined
- Loneliness consequences
- Loneliness triggers
- Possible prevention
- Lifestyle habits for a healthy and enriched life for everyone.



Goal

- My goal is to give you some research-based guidelines for changing those suffering a life of loneliness into an enriched and purposeful life
- 

One Caution!

This presentation may highlight the need for professional help, and by no means should it replace professional help when needed.

First, don't confuse loneliness with being alone. They are not the same. Being alone can be enjoyable and healthy.

“The more high-tech our lives become; the more nature we need to achieve natural balance.”

The Nature Principle –R. Louv

Being alone is not loneliness.

Loneliness Defined

Being Alone

Is a physical state where you are not with others. Being alone can be a time to focus on yourself, your needs, and what makes you feel good.



So, What Is Loneliness ?

Loneliness is the mental or emotional discomfort one may experience from either being alone or feeling as though they are alone.

Loneliness Defined

Being lonely

Is an emotional state where you feel disconnected from others, even when they are nearby. Loneliness can cause people to feel empty, unwanted, and sad.

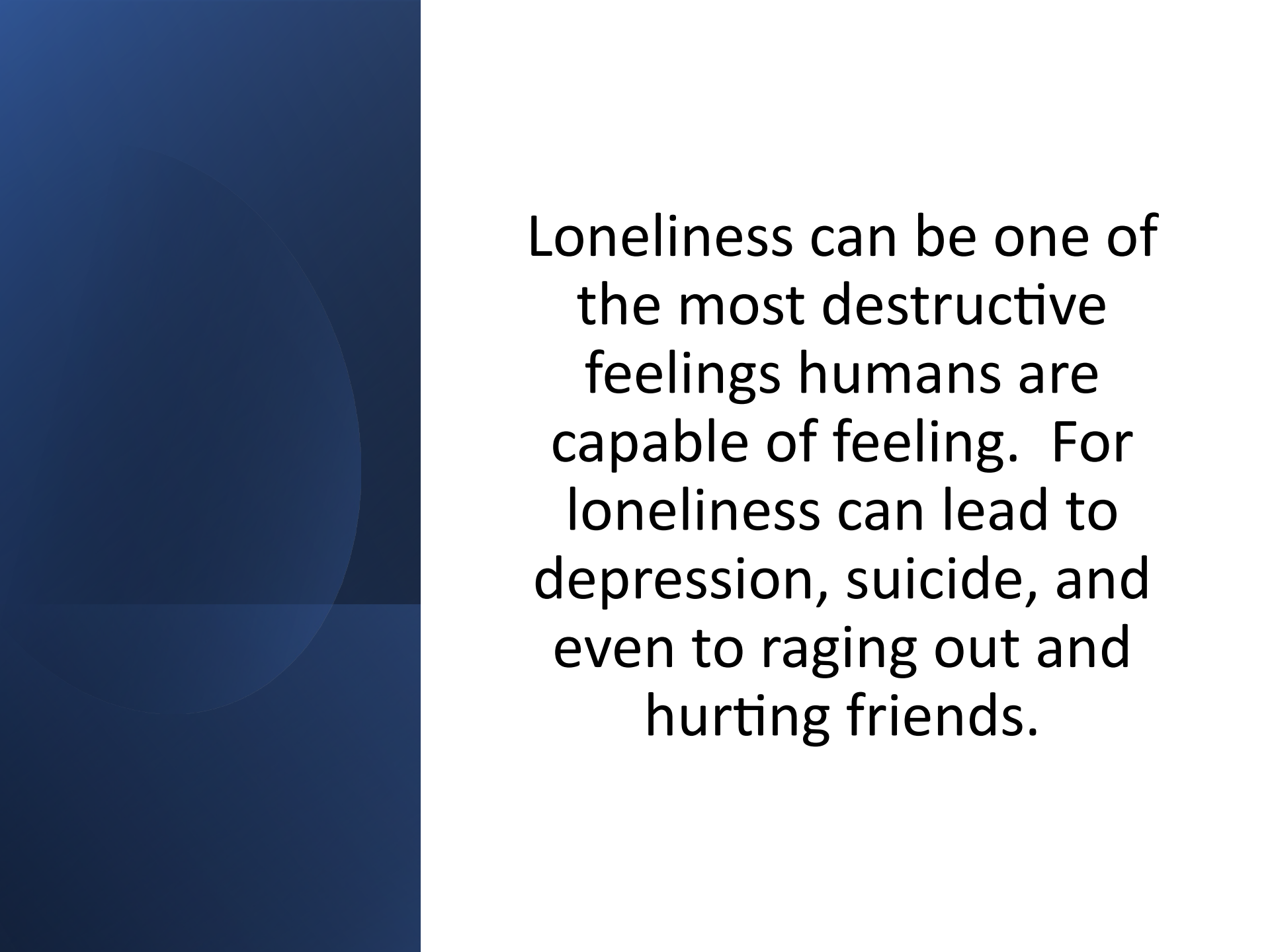


Loneliness Defined

Being alone and being lonely can occur separately or at the same time. For example, you might be alone physically but not feeling lonely. On the other hand, you can feel lonely even when you are in a crowd of people.

What is
loneliness?

It can happen any time
anywhere. You can be
lonely in a crowd, lonely
with friends, lonely with
family. It is often
associated with an
unwanted lack of
connection and intimacy.




Loneliness can be one of the most destructive feelings humans are capable of feeling. For loneliness can lead to depression, suicide, and even to raging out and hurting friends.

Loneliness by Age

According to the Cigna survey, young adults are twice as likely to be lonely than seniors.

And 79% of adults aged 18 to 24 report feeling lonely compared to 41% of seniors aged 66 and older.




What are some
consequences
of loneliness?

Loneliness Consequences

“Loneliness is far more than just a bad feeling - it harms both individual and societal health. It is associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety, and premature death.”

- Dr. Vivek H. Murthy Surgeon Gen.



Dr. Julianne Holt-Lunstad is a professor of psychology and neuroscience at Brigham Young University. She is a loneliness and social isolation expert whose research focuses on the long-term health effects of social connections. The following are some of her findings:



- Being socially isolated carries the same health risk as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

It is more predictive of
early death than the
effects of obesity, excess
alcohol consumption, air
pollution, or physical
inactivity.

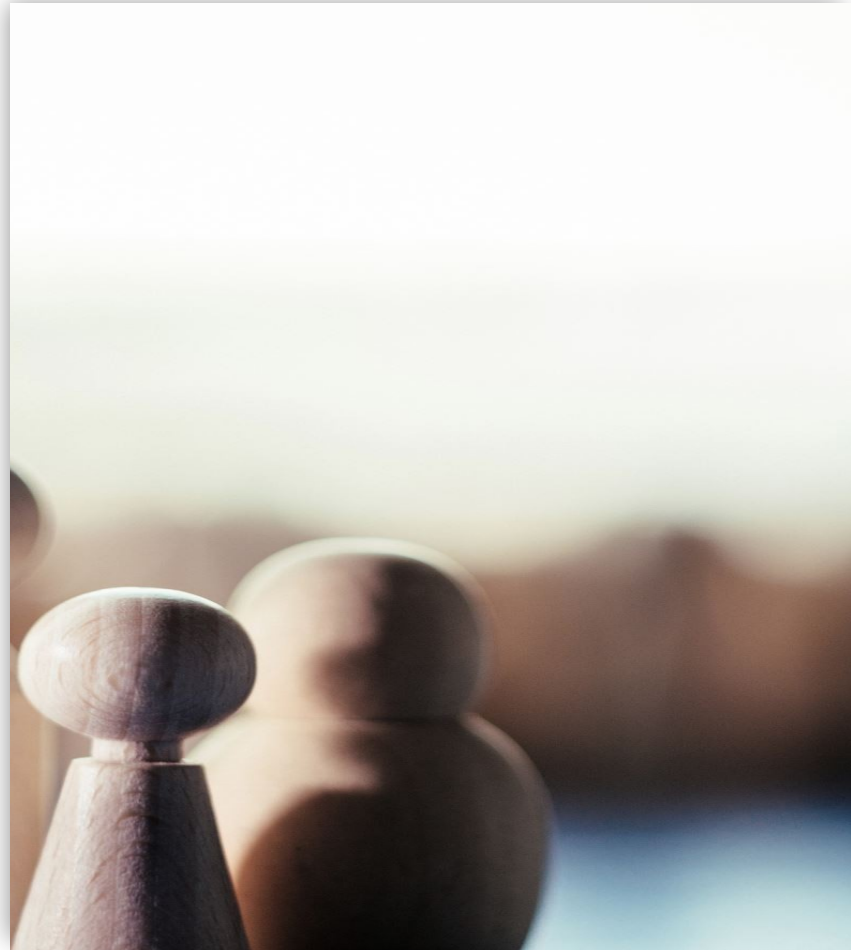
Possible
Triggers

What are some
things that may
contribute to
loneliness?

Loneliness Triggers

Family connections impact feelings of loneliness. Just a third of lonely adults (34%) report talking to their family or partner about how they feel "quite a bit" or "a lot" - half the rate that non-lonely people do (68%).

The loss of a family member, friend or simply a significant person in their lives can trigger loneliness causing the individual to be physically withdrawn from society.



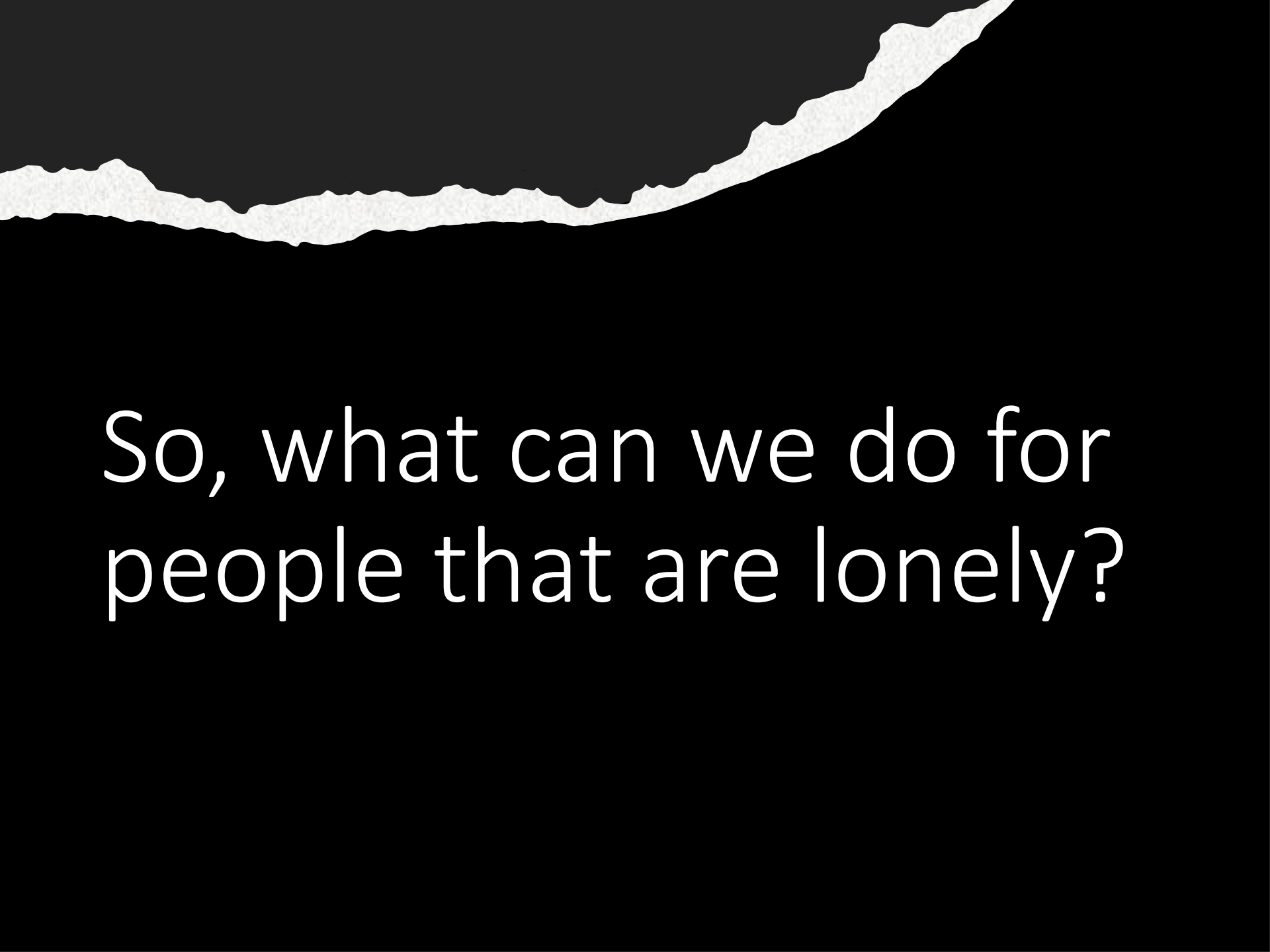


Loneliness Triggers

One typical situation is a man that loses his spouse of many years, living alone, the kids take away the car keys, and he no longer has a sense of purpose in life.

Based on studies from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide is the 15th leading cause of death for seniors 65 and over.

Even before Covid-19
loneliness was a major
cause of depression that
could cause an individual to
engage in alcoholism and
substance abuse.



So, what can we do for
people that are lonely?

The first step that most health care providers would recommend for serious cases is therapy, especially for persons seriously depressed. This may also include prescribing antidepressants.

However, medical experts
also suggest that
alternative approaches
should be utilized before
prescribing medications.

Alternative treatments
include physical exercise,
dieting, acupuncture,
herbs, hypnosis, electro-
shock therapy.



- Another alternative is pet therapy. The pet not only provides companionship but also provides opportunities for social interaction and exercise.



- Let's now shift to those people, especially seniors, that do not require professional assistance but are lonely and life is no longer fulfilling.
- What can we do for them?



Remember, our goal is to change the lives of people from a life of loneliness to an enriched and fulfilling life for the rest of their days.

We can't help everyone, but
everyone can help someone.

- Ronald Reagan



rawforbeauty.com

How
everyone
can help.

This is a job for the entire community.

We need to be in contact and aware of the feelings of our family, friends, neighbors and associates.

So, what can
we do as
individuals to
help someone
with
loneliness?

Unlike Covid and other diseases
where isolation is
recommended, loneliness is just
the opposite.

Connections are the
cure for loneliness.

Personal contacts, face to face,
are preferred.

Suggestions For Help

We know there are two important things to manage loneliness.

The first being close and personal connections as mentioned in the previous slide.

The second is for the lonely person to at least try to make connections.

Suggestions for help.

For the person you are trying to help, try to find his or her interests. Something where they believe they are filling an important need.

For example, if the person is a veteran or relative of a veteran they may have and interest in volunteering at the VA. The VA is always looking for volunteers and this fills the two important needs – purpose and positive connections.

Suggestions for help

There are many opportunities to volunteer in our community, and all have a positive purpose.

And fellow volunteers are by nature positive people.

And don't forget **Matforce**. They are always looking for volunteers.

Suggestions For Help

Another typical situation is the widow living alone in a big house. She is lonely but can't imagine how she could manage a move and get rid of all her stuff.

Her children live in a different state and their visits are infrequent as well as their phone calls.

She is lonely.

Suggestions For Help

Studies show that seniors who move to retirement communities may live 7-10 years longer than those who stay at home. This is because retirement communities offer opportunities for socialization and access to services.

Census data showed that 43% of women over age 75 were living alone.

Suggestions For Help.

People need to realize that moving to a retirement community does not have to be difficult. There are businesses that will help you move; sell the items you don't want to move and donate the rest of the items not sold.

And when you consider the cost of maintaining a home vs a retirement home rent it is not much different.

Suggestions For Help

The children could encourage their mother to move and help when they can.

When the move is complete, and the house is sold there will no longer be the stress of owning a home.

Most important, mother will now be living in a healthy and safer home with increased opportunities for socialization as well as many activities to enjoy.



Suggestions For Help

Those are just a few suggestions for helping people that are lonely.

I challenge you to think of more ideas.


Keep in mind the importance of personal connections. Avoid the internet if possible.



Challenge

Remember!

This is an ongoing community effort.
We can all help someone overcome loneliness.




Now let's talk briefly
about everybody's
health, including those
suffering from
loneliness.

Several studies have
shown that there are
good lifestyles that will
add years to your life.


Highlands Center Story

- Just a brief pause to tell you my Highlands Center story and more importantly some of the people I met along the way.



What are those good lifestyles?

There are ten.

- The first seven provide a healthy foundation for a healthy life.
 - The next three for an enriched life without loneliness.
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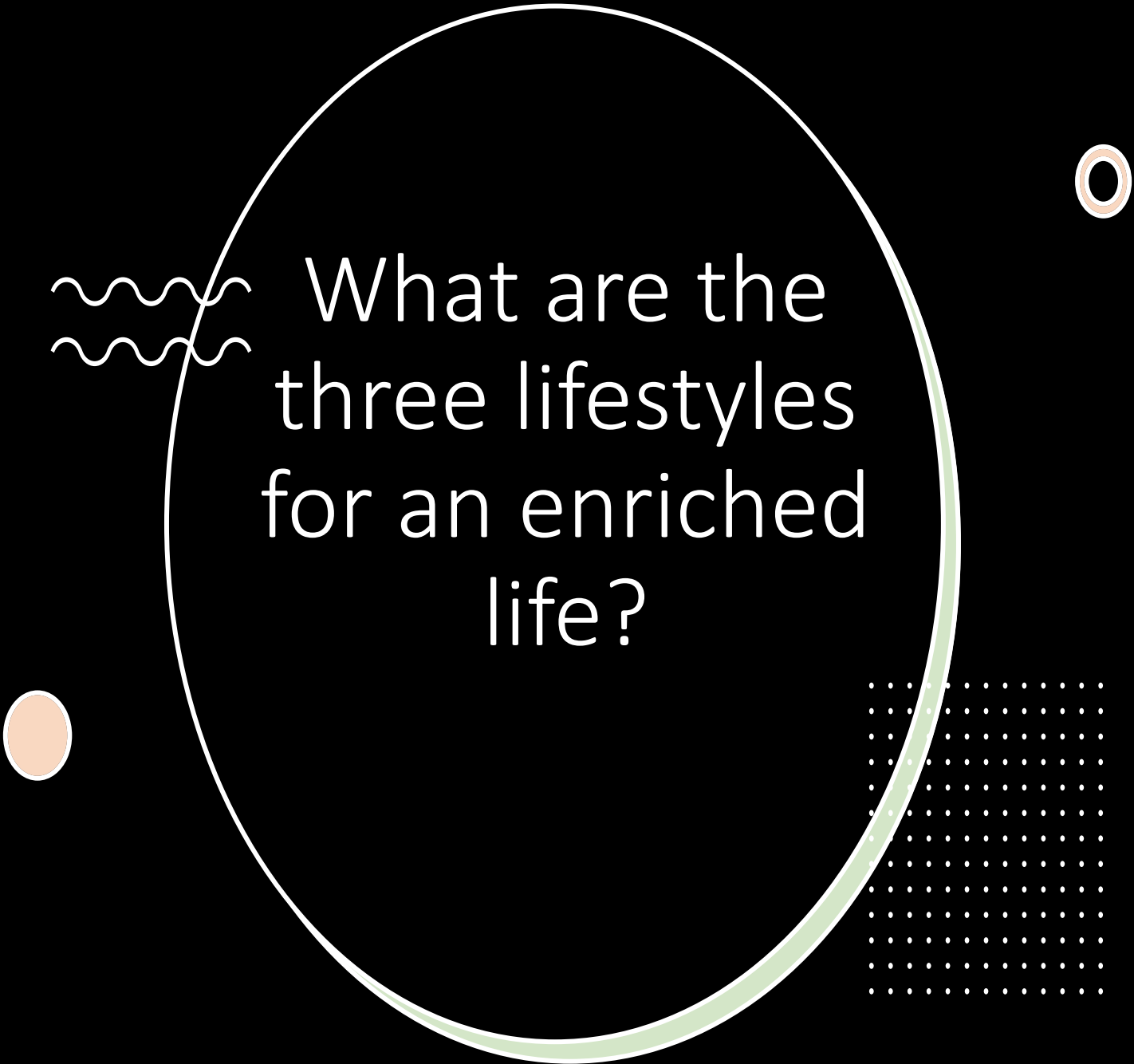
Seven
lifestyles for
a healthy
life.

- No smoking or street drugs.
- Little or no alcohol
- Healthy nutrition
- Healthy weight
- Proper sleep
- Exercise-30 minutes per day at least.
- Stress management


Exercise

- I want to emphasize the importance and enjoyment of walking outside in nature. Even just around the block.

It is a beautiful way to combine exercise with stress management and weight control. Getting 15 minutes of sun provides a healthy amount of vitamin D.



What are the
three lifestyles
for an enriched
life?



Keep
learning and
challenging
the brain.

Develop
positive friends

The image features a solid black background. At the bottom, there is a white, irregular, torn-paper-like border that runs horizontally across the width of the image. The text "Develop positive friends" is written in a white, sans-serif font in the upper left quadrant.

A close-up, low-angle shot of a human hand reaching upwards, palm facing up. The hand is positioned in the lower foreground, with fingers slightly spread. In the background, a bright sun is visible at the top center, creating a strong lens flare and illuminating the scene with a warm, golden light. A faint rainbow is visible in the sky, arching across the middle ground. The overall atmosphere is one of hope, aspiration, and reaching for a goal.

Have a life with a purpose.

Additional Concerns

1956 vs. 2025

Concerns

- 77% of American youth would not qualify for military service without a waiver due to being overweight, drugs or mental and physical problems.

Additional Lifestyle Concerns

In today's world
we are faced
with health
challenges that
our bodies have
not been given
time to adapt.

Today's Challenges

- ❖ Too much sugar.
- ❖ Too much stress.
- ❖ Too much sitting
- ❖ Too much pollution
- ❖ Too little sleep
- ❖ Too many screens

Concerns

- We eat approximately 20% more calories than we did 100 years ago.
- Plus 700 to 3000 percent more fructose.

Concerns

- “And therein lies the root of blood sugar problems, such as prediabetes and type 2 diabetes, conditions that effect over 50% of adults and nearly 30% of children in the U.S.” *Good Energy* Casey Means

Warning

Ultra processed Foods

We eat ultra processed foods that are chemically engineered to be addictive and make up nearly 70% of calories consumed by people living in the U.S. today.

Result

74 % of U.S. adults are
overweight or obese.

93.2 % have metabolic
dysfunction, the process of
converting food to energy.

Summary of Concerns

- In summary, these concerns apply to everyone, not just the lonely.
- I don't expect the government to solve these problems soon. There are millions of dollars opposing change on a national scale.
- The responsibility lies with every individual to become educated and take personal care of themselves and their individual family members.

References

- *Together* – Vivek H. Murthy, MD
- *The End of Mental Illness*
Daniel G. Amen, MD
- *The Nature Principle* – Richard Louv
- *The Power of Neuro-plasticity*
Shad Helmstetter, PH.D
- *Good Energy* – Casey Means MD

Email

I welcome email questions or comments.

However, be sure to put Loneliness somewhere in the subject of your email. Since I may not know your email address, unless I know the subject I will not open your email. Thanks

bensontom927@gmail.com

The background of the slide is a dark teal color, populated with numerous speech bubbles of various colors including red, yellow, purple, and grey. Each speech bubble contains a large, dark blue question mark. The bubbles are scattered across the entire frame, creating a pattern that suggests a continuous flow of questions and discussion.

Questions and discussion

A serene landscape photograph featuring a wooden boat in the foreground, partially obscured by the branches of a large tree on the left. The boat is positioned on a calm body of water that reflects the surrounding scenery. In the background, there are lush green mountains and a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow and a soft mist over the water. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Thank you.