Loneliness in College

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Learning Objectives:

By the end of this presentation, you will:

- Understand the definition of loneliness and the statistics within the US.
- Identify the common myths surrounding loneliness and its effects.
- Find ways to overcome the feeling of loneliness.
What is Loneliness?

Loneliness is defined as a distressing feeling that accompanies the perception that one’s social needs are not being met by the quantity or especially the quality of one’s social relationships (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010).

Loneliness is a bodily function, like hunger.

Hunger makes you pay attention to your physical needs.

Loneliness makes you pay attention to your social needs.
In the US, 46% of the entire population feel lonely regularly (Cigna U.S. Loneliness Index, 2018).
At least two in five surveyed sometimes or always feel:

**Their relationships were not meaningful (43%)**

**They lack companionship (43%)**

**Isolated from others (43%)**

**No longer feel close to anyone (39%)**

Statistics retrieved from
Common Myths

The more friends you have, the less lonely you’ll feel.
FALSE. It’s the quality of the relationship that matters, not quantity.
(Parker & Asher, 1993)

You can’t be lonely when you are with people.
FALSE. Being lonely and being alone ARE NOT the same thing.
(Li & Kanazawa, 2016)

Loneliness is ALWAYS bad for you.
FALSE. Feeling loneliness is a sign to help you re-evaluate your relationships.
(Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010)
Effects of Loneliness

How Loneliness Can Affect Your Health

- Heart problems
- Depression
- Higher stress
- Decreased memory
- Drug abuse risk
- Brain changes

Illustration by Brianna Gilmartin, Verywell

(Cacioppo, Hawkley, Crawford, 2002)
What can we do about loneliness?
What The Research Says

Recognize and accept the loneliness (Rokach & Brock, 1998).

Do something you enjoy!  
(Rokach, 2001)

Connection. Connection. Connection.  
(Masi, Chen, Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2011).
Recommended
On-campus Resources

Link: https://studenthealth.usc.edu/
Counseling

Link: https://kortschakcenter.usc.edu/
Academic Coaching
Recommended Books

EMOTIONAL FIRST AID
Healing Rejection, Guilt, Failure, and Other Everyday Hurts
GUY WINCH, PH.D.

loneliness
Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection
John T. Cacioppo & William Patrick

“One of the most important books about the human condition to appear in a decade.” —Daniel Gilbert, author of Happiness

Cacioppo, J. T., & Decety, J. (2009). What are the brain mechanisms on which psychological processes are based? *Perspectives on psychological science, 4*(1), 10-18.


