LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

"Loneliness is a state of distress or discomfort that results when one perceives a gap between one's desire for social connection and an actual experience of it "

Vivek Murphy MD – Surgeon General of the United States.

The Epidemic of Loneliness

- 52% of Americans feel lonely.
- 47% report their relationship with others are not meaningful.
- 58% of people report that they sometimes or always feel like no one knows them well.
- 30 % of people do not know anyone in their lives that they trust.
- 30% do not know the names of their neighbors.

Can someone feel lonely when they are in a crowd of people?

Loneliness is a state of mind, with a perception of social isolation. There is a dissociation what an individual expects from a relationship and social interaction, and what the person experiences.

There is *emotional loneliness* with a lack of affective bonding with others. *Social loneliness* where social relationships are unsatisfactory. *Imposter syndrome and loneliness* have led to substance use disorders and suicide.

Loneliness is being in a crowd because you have a lack of deep ties with other people, and you have a lack of interpersonal relationships. You feel disconnected from others around you. You cannot find common interests. You may feel distressed, with less satisfaction in life.

Men and Woman may have individual issues that differ.

Men follow sociability norms and have a feeling of vulnerable in having meaningful conversations about their feelings. Men may have difficulty making new friends as they age. Men may feel that they are high achievers and driven to perfection. Women have concerns about their social ability and caregivers and life transitions, such as divorce and family dynamics, comparison with others and communication styles.

What is the role of DEI and loneliness?

When evaluating DEI, you may feel disconnected because of color, women, disabilities, and the LGBTQ1A+ community. You may feel isolated and disconnected from others. Those with hearing and visual impairment, and intellectual disabilities, may feel isolated and rejected from the community. This also applies to caregivers who are under increased stress. Living alone, job

loss/ dissatisfaction, divorce and financial hardship and doing poorly in school, may be contributing factors. As we age and have cognitive decline, we may not be able to share our emotions with others.

This predated COVID, but it has gotten worse since that time. Social media/ internet use may substitute for meaningful relationships, but it also has been a means to connect with others with programs and connection with old friends. It also has allowed people to engage in synagogue/ men's clubs' activities have friends with Shabbat dinners and making new acquaintances.

Are there consequences of loneliness?

Consequences have included, ***increase stress, anxiety, exclusion, sadness, obesity, cardiovascular disease, and increased mortality.***

What can be done to prevent loneliness and how do you treat it?

Start by acknowledging that you are human:

- develop a plan,
- learn something new,
- perform an act of kindness!
- Self-care- music therapy,
- Diet and exercise,
- meditation, animal therapy, tech innovation, counseling,
- support groups.
- if needed, seek professional help.

We build emotional strength by ***making friends***, participating in ***group activities***, ***synagogue services***, and ***joining a men's club***. Join a class and do not be surprised if you have false starts. You could develop a "relationship with the divine," with prayer, and create your "culture of connection ". Religion and spirituality may give meaning to your life.

Listen to people explain how they feel, respect what they are saying You do not have all their answers. We can develop a dialogue with ourselves to reflect our inner feelings and needs. We can make a list and express it in writing.

There are organizations including ***EVERYMAN***, ***Men's Shed***, and others that have helped build relationships and people's well-being.

Protect the Brain!!!

Friendships help protect the brain and body from anxiety, stress, and depression. Loneliness may cause one to lose their dignity. You have the power to communicate and give your life purpose.

The FJMC has developed modules though it is Hearing men's Voices and the Imagine Life Initiative, to create a "culture of connection." We will show up for each other to create a community of "belonging ", Friendship." and 'trust ".

After G-d created Adam, he said "It's not good for humans to be alone."
G-d labeled loneliness - the 1st human problem.

Steven Mandel MD

Clinical Professor of Neurology
Zucker School of Medicine
Hofstra/Northwell

Adjunct Clinical Professor of Medicine
NY Medical College