

TO YOUR HEALTH


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An Epidemic of Loneliness

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Even though the worst of Covid-19 is, for the most part, under control - we are still feeling the effects of our previous need to isolate from each other in the past few years. We human beings are social creatures; it is in our nature to be connected with one another and we suffer when we are apart for extended periods of time. In the 2023 advisory report, "*Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation*" from the office of the U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, we have learned that our isolation from each other has had a cost in terms of our overall health.




Some dramatic statistics from the Surgeon General's report are that "*Lacking social connection is as dangerous as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, drinking 6 alcoholic drinks per day, physical inactivity, obesity and air pollution.*" Studies have shown that the strongest areas of morbidity from loneliness and isolation are in cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes, infectious diseases, cognitive function, depression, anxiety and suicidality.



During the pandemic, we had to switch from many of our in-person interactions to seeing each other online. While this solved many issues at the time, it also came at a cost. Many young people replaced learning how to interact socially face to face with moving to social media as a way to stay connected. The Surgeon General's advisory reported that "*young people ages 15-24 ... had 70% less social interaction with their friends [than 2 decades ago.]*" This has had a huge impact on their ability to cultivate and nurture relationships, begging the question about whether social media needs to be regulated.

Naming the current loneliness epidemic is a first step in being able to rectify the problem. Here are some ideas from the Surgeon General's report that we can all use to alleviate our feelings of separation.

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- Understand the power of social connection and the consequences of social disconnection
 - Invest time in nurturing your relationships
 - Minimize distraction during conversation



- Seek out opportunities to serve and support others
- Be responsive, supportive, and practice gratitude
- Actively engage with people of different backgrounds and experiences
- Participate in social and community groups
- Reduce practices that lead to feelings of disconnection from others
- Seek help during times of struggle
- Be open with your health care provider
- Make time for civic engagement
- Reflect the core values of connection

Living in a community like Carleton-Willard may be one way to alleviate loneliness, however we cannot assume that no one is feeling isolated. According to Dr. Murthy, "*you can feel lonely even if you have a lot of people around you, because loneliness is about the quality of your connections.*" How can each of us cultivate our connections with one another?

(continued)

One possible solution to the issue of isolation here at the village is participation in the new Heart 2 Heart program. The vision for the program is aligned with alleviating loneliness;

*The **Heart-2-Heart** volunteer program is designed to contribute to the health and vitality of the Carleton-Willard community by giving Residents a way to make new connections and friendships with other Residents, through meaningful volunteer opportunities that enrich their lives.*

We connect H2H volunteers with Residents who could benefit from increased social interaction. Volunteering can be meaningful for both the volunteer and the person they are visiting. If you are interested in volunteering, contact Rev. Alexx Wood or Marcia Feldman.

In the current climate in our country, it can feel like the things that separate us are stronger than those that unite us. We each have the ability to turn this around if we choose to. How can we participate in our communities more? Are there friendships in our lives that we have drifted apart from that we could re-ignite? Do we reach out to others when we feel isolated or lonely? All these can help us feel more socially connected to each other.

Fall Survey Coming Soon

In September, the Clinic will be conducting a fall survey. This will be an anonymous survey to provide the Clinic with information about falls that take place among the Independent Residents. CWV would like to provide the best tools to prevent a fall and keep Residents as independent as possible.



Look out for the survey in September.

Fire Safety—Maeve Lobo, LICSW

The Bedford Fire Department has alerted us to a concerning accumulation of paper in residents' homes, particularly around the kitchen and stove area. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), cooktops are responsible for more than 53% of kitchen fires. Fires can escalate rapidly, with a small flame turning into a full fire within just 30 seconds (FEMA). It's crucial to keep paper towels, packaging, and other combustible materials away from the stove and out of the kitchen to minimize fire risks.

Managing paperwork may not be the most enjoyable task, but it's essential. Items like bills, insurance policies, and monthly statements are important to review regularly. Consider opting for email delivery to simplify organization. For preserving old records and photos, create digital backups. Using apps like the Notes App on the iPhone can be very useful.

If you find yourself accumulating unsorted papers and mail, consider keeping a recycling bin nearby for quick disposal of unnecessary documents, such as solicitation emails. Evaluate the necessity of keeping items that have been sitting in unsorted boxes for over six months. Investment statements, for example, can quickly become outdated, so limit the number you keep on file.

To further reduce paper clutter, utilize audio and digital calendars like the CWV Telephone calendar and electronic notice boards whenever possible. This shift can help minimize your overall paper consumption and streamline your organizational efforts. Most importantly it will reduce the hazard paper can present in the home.

www.nfpa.org
www.fema.gov

"I just want someone to hear what I have to say. And maybe if I talk long enough, it'll make sense."

- Ray Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451

