



**LIVING ALONE IS HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH**  
COHOUSING, MULTI-GENERATIONAL LIVING, AND  
AGING IN PLACE TO THE RESCUE





# LONELINESS

UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING IT TO  
MAKE HEATH AND HOUSING BETTER



[Loneliness is] "the Horror not to be surveyed"

*-Emily Dickinson*



# WHY SO MUCH ATTENTION ON LONELINESS NOW?

- Credible research is indicating that large, ever-increasing numbers of people are lonely
- Recent recognition that the issue is not confined to a single demographic or specific settings/situations
- Studies that show loneliness as a reliable predictor of both morbidity and mortality



# LONELINESS BY THE NUMBERS

People are becoming more isolated.

**10%** of people often feel lonely.



1/3 of us think we have a close friend or relative who is very lonely.



1/2 think people are getting lonelier in general.

**FACTOID**

**1 in 4**

people say they have no one to talk to about their personal troubles or triumphs in survey of 1,500 people.

Rule out family members and it rises to **1 in 2**.





# LONELINESS BY THE NUMBERS

## Survey Finds Nearly Three-Quarters (72%) of Americans Feel Lonely

Osteopathic Physicians Say Silent 'Loneliness Epidemic' Contributes to Nation's Health Woes



AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION

TREATING OUR FAMILY AND YOURS

NEWS PROVIDED BY

[American Osteopathic Association →](#)

Oct 11, 2016, 12:00 ET

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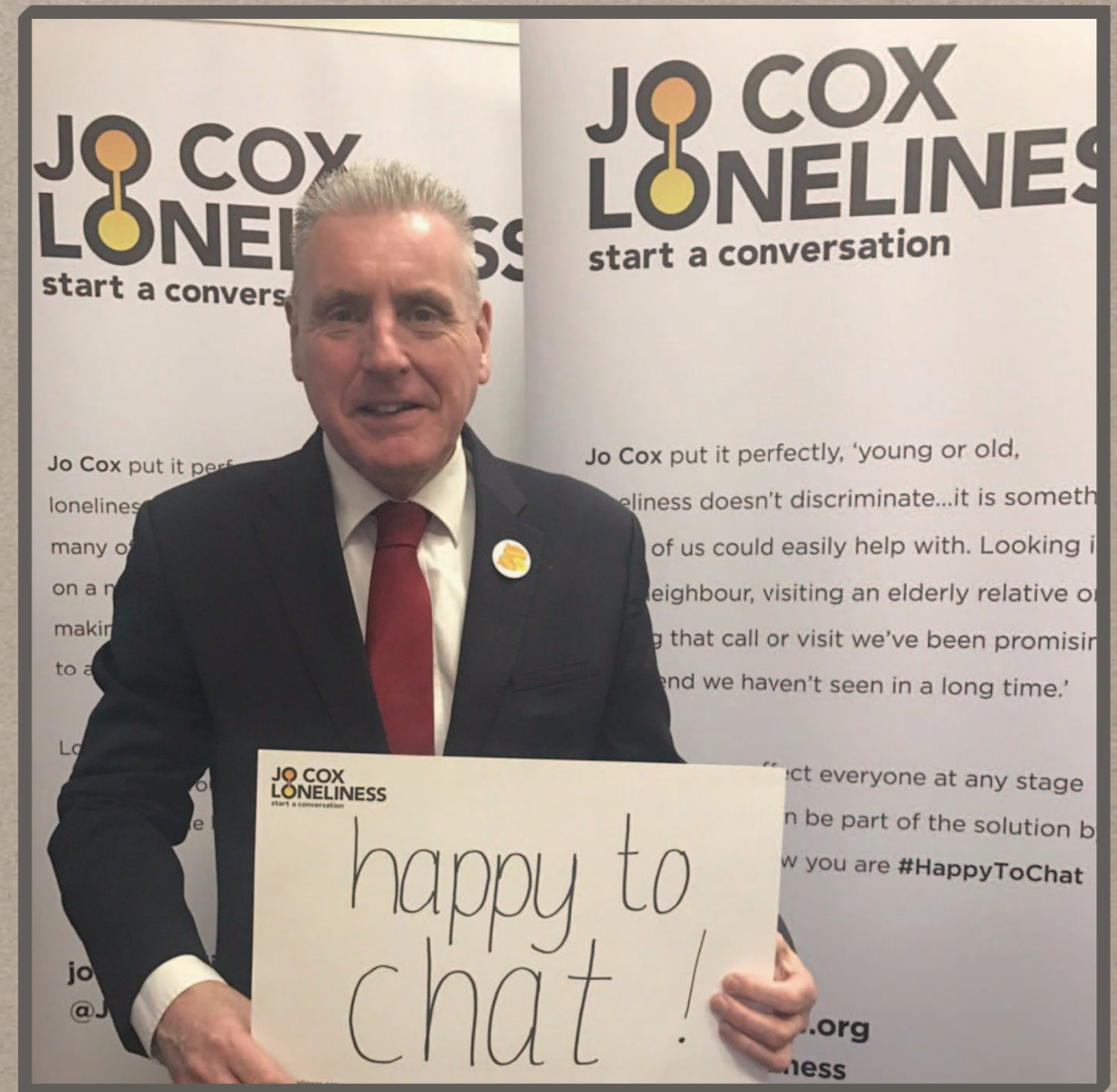


CHICAGO, Oct. 11, 2016 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- A new survey of more than 2,000 American adults found 72 percent report having felt a sense of loneliness, with nearly a third (31 percent) experiencing loneliness at least once a week. The survey was conducted online by Harris Poll on behalf of the American Osteopathic Association in September.



# WHY THE VARIATION IN THE NUMBERS?

- Many dimensions of loneliness
- Three time and duration-related categories
- Six specific types/kinds of loneliness
- Stigma around loneliness

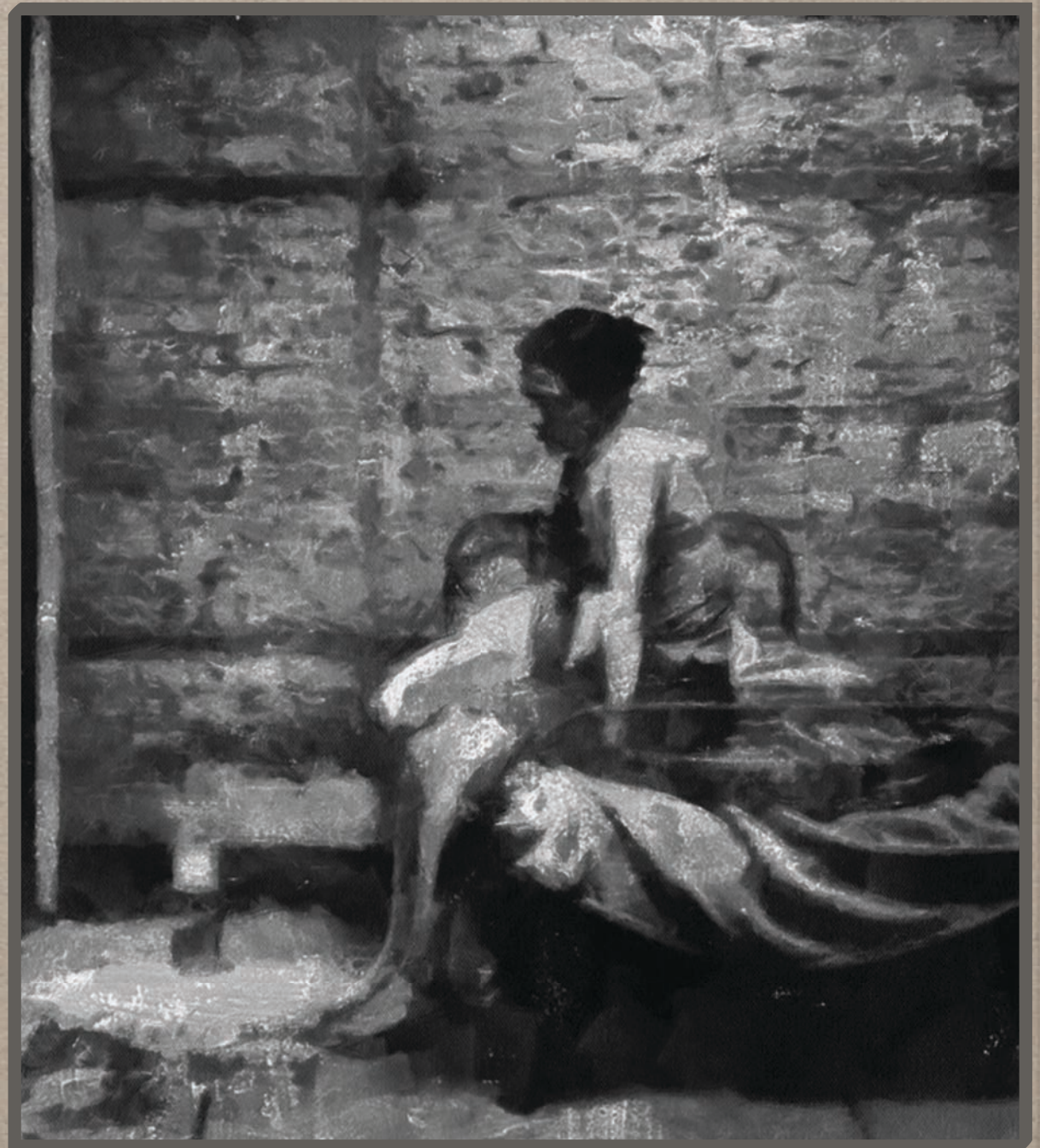


REFERENCE/PHOTO: VERNON COAKER, LABOUR MP FOR GEDLING, VIA TWITTER



# TIME AND THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF LONELINESS

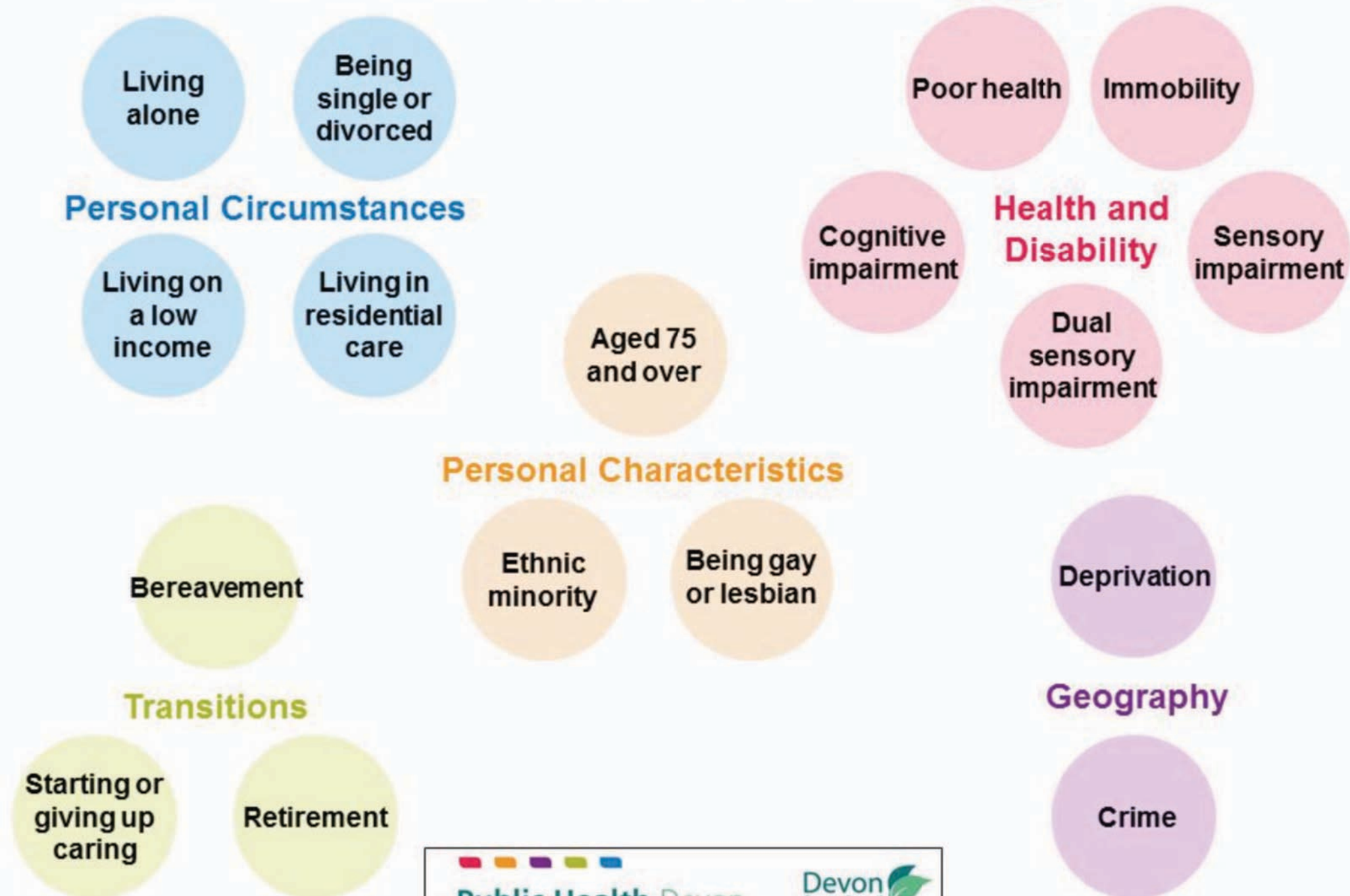
- Transient loneliness
- Situational loneliness
- Chronic loneliness
- Loneliness is not static—it is a fluid experience even for the severely lonely





# SITUATIONAL FACTORS AND LONELINESS

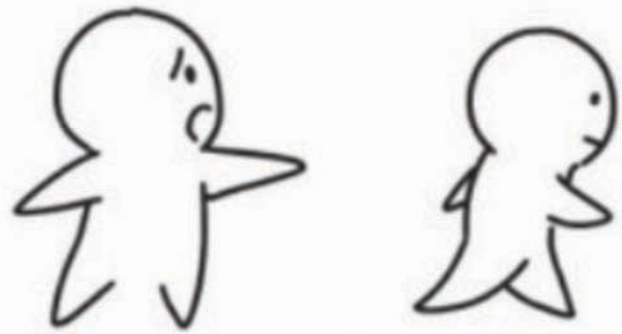
## Social Isolation 'Triggers'





# LONELINESS

interpersonal



social



cultural



intellectual



psychological



existential/cosmic



## SIX KINDS OF LONELINESS

REFERENCE: PSYCH2GO



# STIGMA AROUND LONELINESS

"Yet the very word "lonely" carries a negative connotation...signaling social weakness, or an inability to stand on one's own."

*-The New York Times, "Researchers Confront an Epidemic of Loneliness", by Katie Hafner*

*attr: John T. Cacioppo, a professor of psychology at the University of Chicago and the director of the Center for Cognitive and Social Neurosis*



# Who are the lonely?



## LONELINESS AND OUTLIERS

YES BUT...



# LONELINESS THAT FITS STEREOTYPES

Who is more lonely?

**women** more than men.

**unmarried men** more than unmarried women.

**African-Americans** more than whites.

**less educated** more than better educated.

**unemployed and retired** more than employed.





# WHILE IT'S ABOUT ELDERS, IT'S NOT ONLY ABOUT ELDERS

Loneliness varies with age.

**1 in 3**

adults **age 45** and over  
reported being chronically  
lonely in **2010**.



**1 in 5**

reported in **2000**.

---

**40%**

of adults today say they are  
lonely, up from **20%** in the  
**1980s**.



# Unwanted Social Isolation of Seniors Social Vulnerabilities and Supports

## RISK FACTORS

poverty  
Physical Health & Mobility Limitations

Mental Health Limitations  
Language Barrier  
Caregiving for a Loved One

Transportation Issues  
Emotional Health Issues  
Environmental

## LOSSES/CRISES

Loss of Income  
Physical Health & Mobility Crises  
Death of Loved One

Mental Health Crisis  
Loss of Connections with Family

Loss of Home  
Loss of Driver's License  
Loss of a pet

## EXTERNAL SUPPORTS FROM COMMUNITY & OTHERS

Income Supports  
Medical/Health Supports

Family/Caregiving Supports  
Community Supports  
Religious Communities

Seniors Housing  
Transportation  
Advocate's Support

## INTERNAL RESILIENCE FACTORS & SELF-CARE

Personally-  
Meaningful  
Action

Spirituality

Personal Resilience

Self Advocacy

staying Active  
& healthy

Positive Relationship



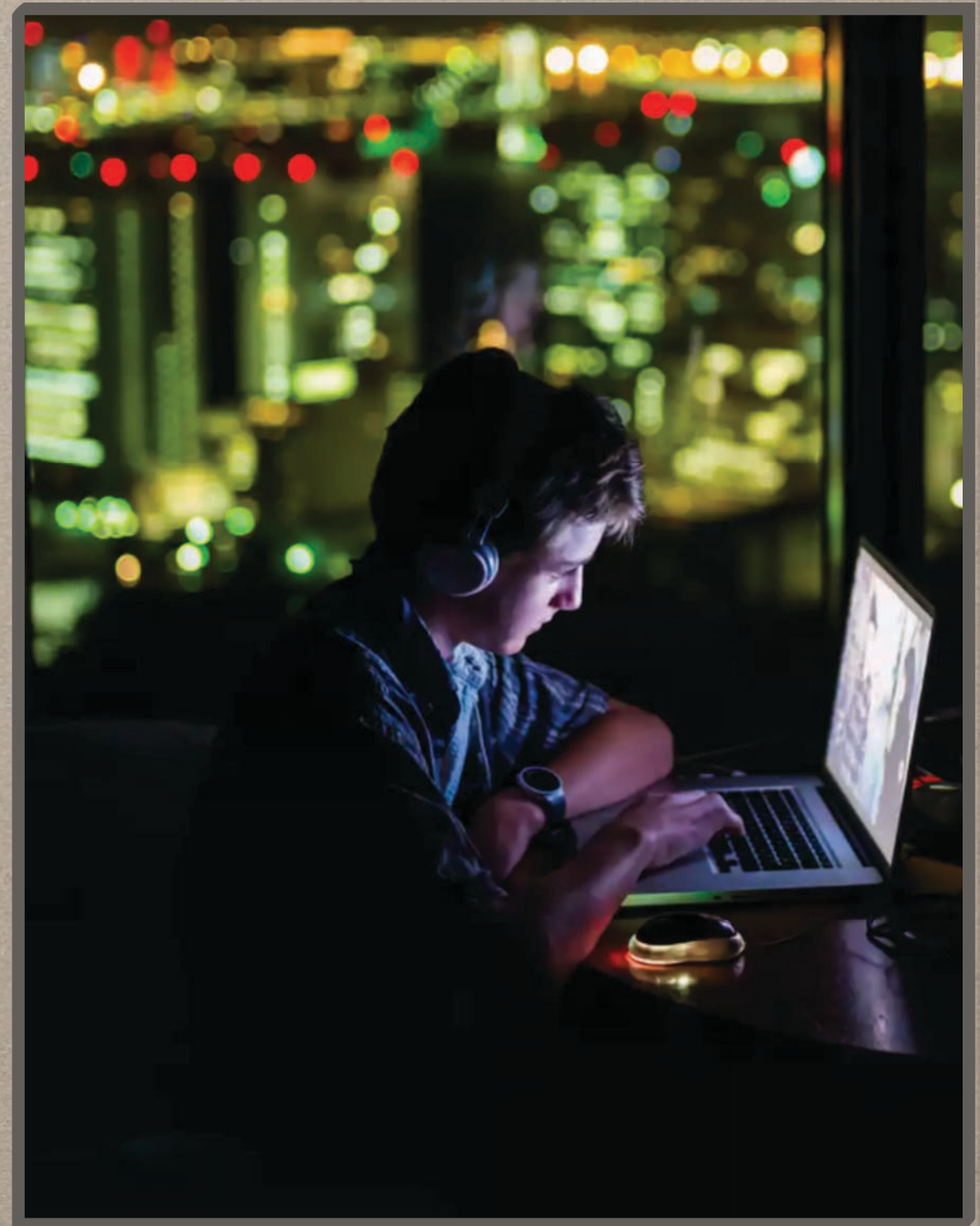
# ELDERS AND LONELINESS

REFERENCE: [HTTPS://CONNECTINGEDMONTONSENIORS.CA/SOCIAL-VULNERABILITY-MAY-LEAD-TO-ISOLATION/](https://connectingedmontonseniors.ca/social-vulnerability-may-lead-to-isolation/)



# YOUTH AND LONELINESS

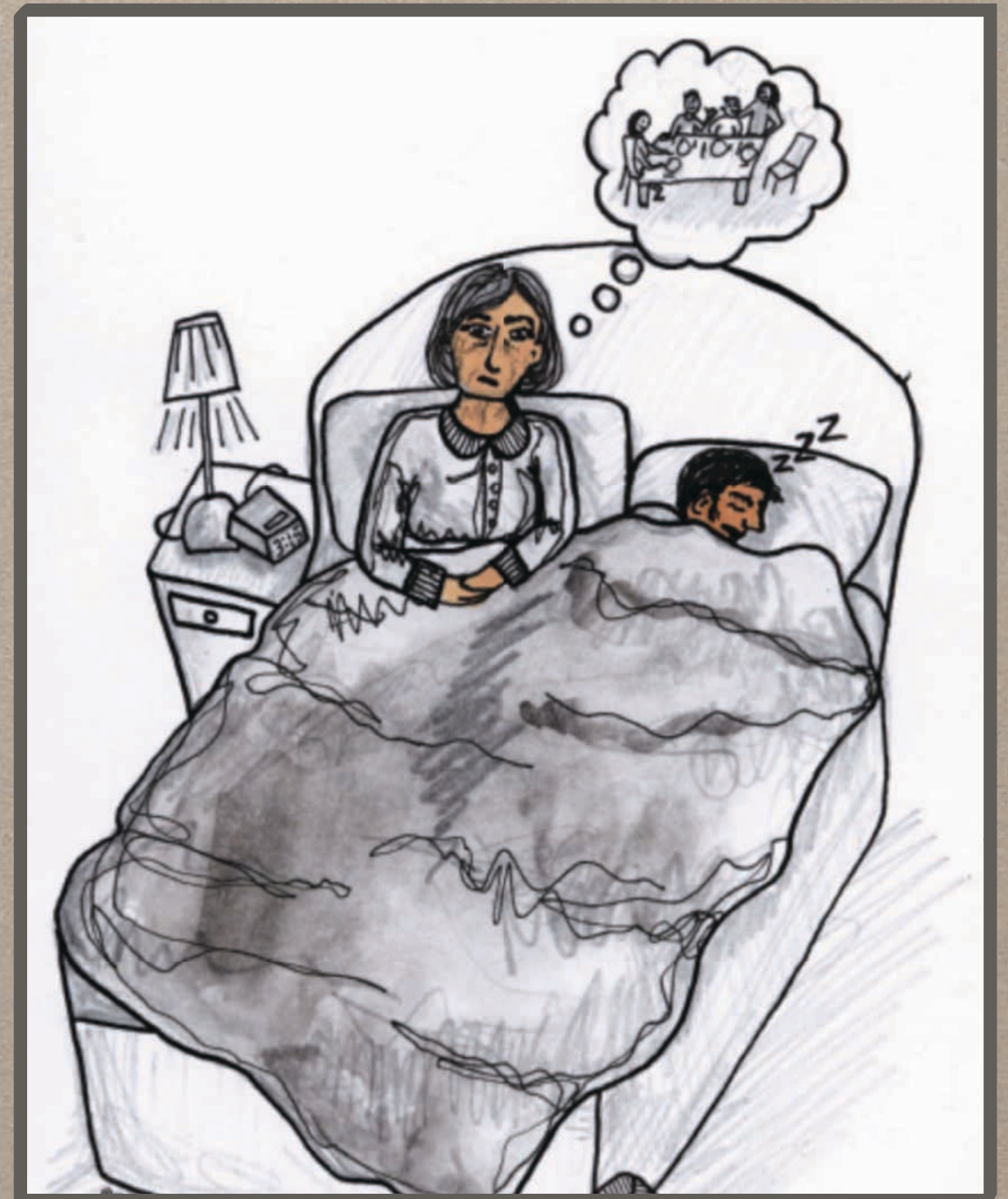
- Mental Health Foundation (UK) identifies 18- to 35-year olds, not teenagers, as the age group most likely to struggle with loneliness.
- Identifying social media as the (primary) culprit lessening our understanding of the situation





# THOSE MOST LIKELY TO BE LONELY—UNEXPECTED IRONY

- Loneliness peaks in adolescents and young adults, then again in the oldest old
- Stronger risks for those under 65 than those over 65
- Negatively correlated with income
- Being unmarried is a risk, although the most lonely are married, live with others, and are not clinically depressed
- Being childless a risk factor, although having uninvolved children a greater risk



REFERENCE: [HTTP://STANDALONE.ORG.UK/GUIDES/FESTIVE-GUIDE/](http://standalone.org.uk/guides/festive-guide/)

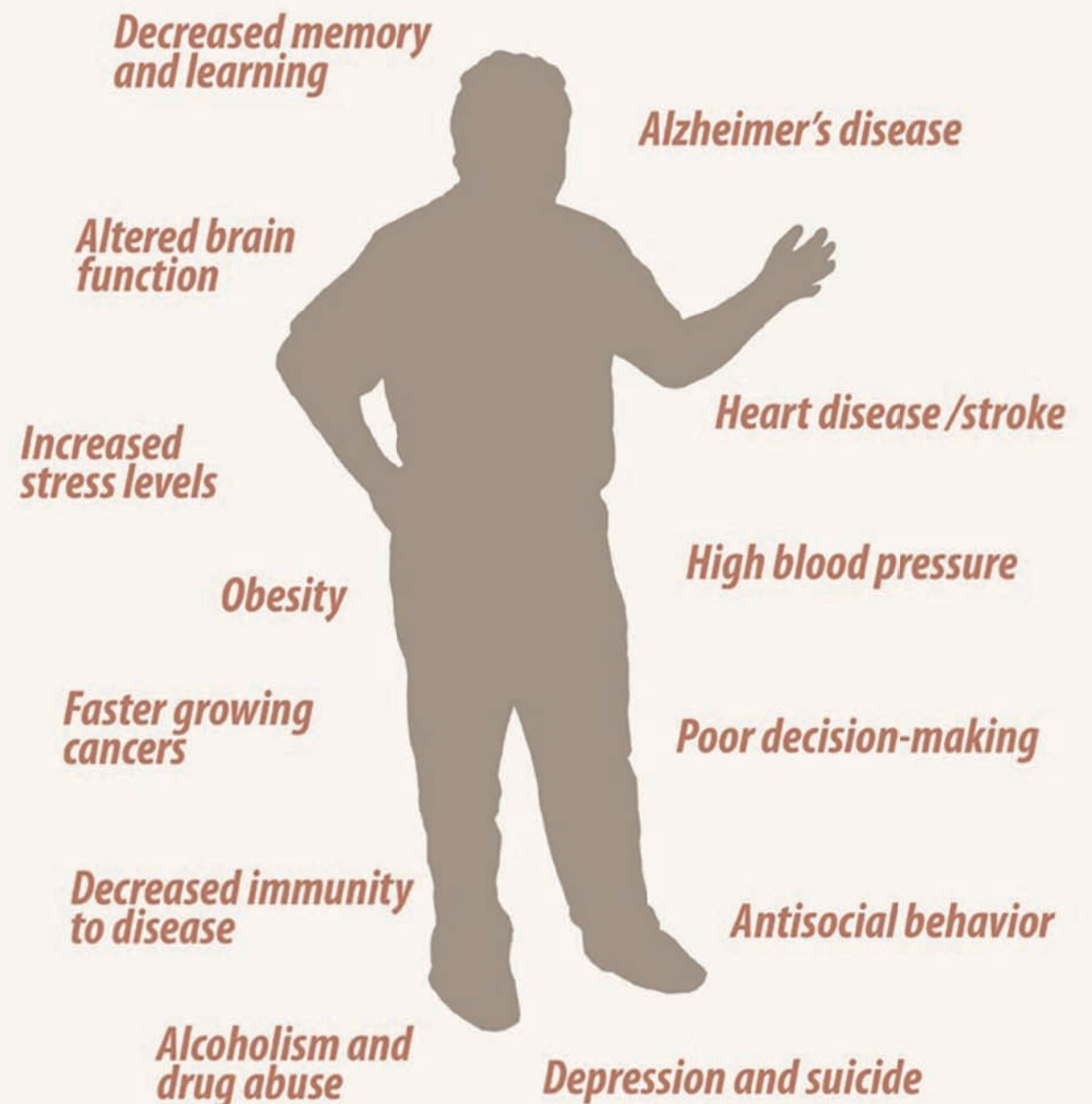


# HEALTH HAZARDS OF LONELINESS

- Activates danger signals in the brain which in turn
  - Raise the level of stress hormones
  - Create higher vascular resistance
  - Lower the production of white blood cells
  - Increase inflammation

## Loneliness is lethal.

Emotional isolation is ranked as high a risk factor for mortality as smoking. Physical diseases may surface with loneliness, including:





# MORE ON HEALTH IMPACTS

- A causal factor for loneliness can be health problems; in addition, loneliness itself can cause health problems
- Disrupted sleep
- Increased risk of high blood pressure and stroke

## **Physical health**



Can be as harmful to your health as  
smoking 15 cigarettes a day

Increases risk of high blood  
pressure

Higher risk of the onset of disability



# MORE ON HEALTH IMPACTS

- Mental health issues can both increase the likelihood of loneliness—and can be a result of it
- Loneliness makes brain go into self-preservation mode
- Creates perception of constant danger
- Establishes link between loneliness and violence

## **Mental health**



Greater risk of cognitive decline

64% chance of developing clinical dementia

More prone to depression

Predictive of suicide in older age



# MORE ON HEALTH IMPACTS

- Loneliness affects the ability to perform the activities of daily living i.e. bathing, dressing, eating
- In the younger, the issue is securing independence
  - Here loneliness affects the ability to learn

## **Maintaining independence**



More likely to visit the GP, and have higher use of medication

Early entry into residential or nursing care

Use accident and emergency services



# LEADS US TO THE "SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH"

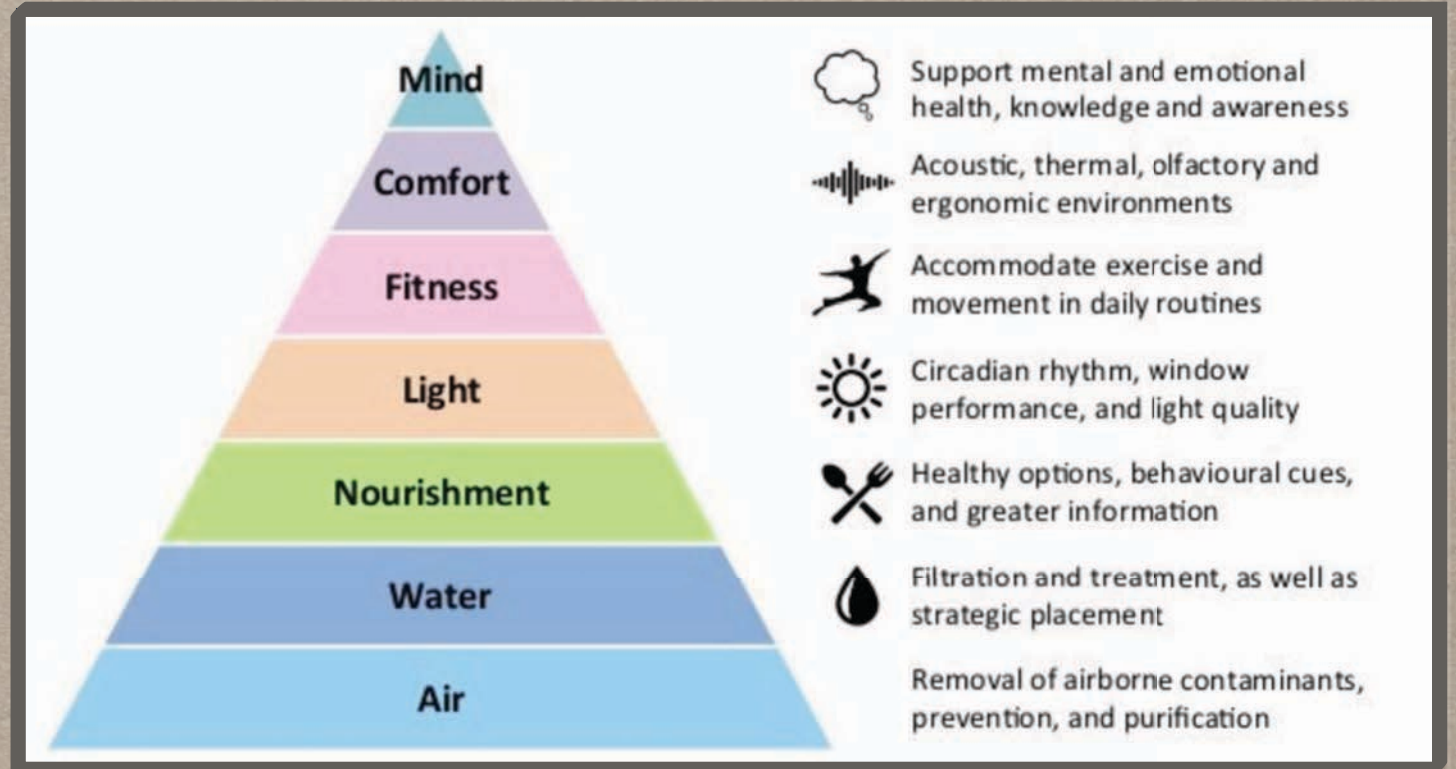
- From the CDC Healthy People 2020: "The complex, integrated, and overlapping social structures and economic systems that are responsible for most health inequities. These social structures and economic systems include the social environment, physical environment, health services, and structural and societal factors."
- Goal: To create social and physical environments that promote good health for all.





# FOCUS WITHIN DEVELOPMENT, LAND USE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Wellness Building Standard
- Biophilic design
- Supportive housing and initiatives around multi-generational social support and integration of health care are the exception





# Social Determinants of Health

Economic Stability	Neighborhood and Physical Environment	Education	Food	Community and Social Context	Health Care System
Employment Income Expenses Debt Medical bills Support	Housing Transportation Safety Parks Playgrounds Walkability	Literacy Language Early childhood education Vocational training Higher education	Hunger Access to healthy options	Social integration Support systems Community engagement Discrimination	Health coverage Provider availability Provider linguistic and cultural competency Quality of care

## Health Outcomes

Mortality, Morbidity, Life Expectancy, Health Care Expenditures, Health Status, Functional Limitations



# ALL HOUSING TYPES AFFECTED BY SOCIAL CONTEXT



- Reference: Opticos Design, Daniel Parolek



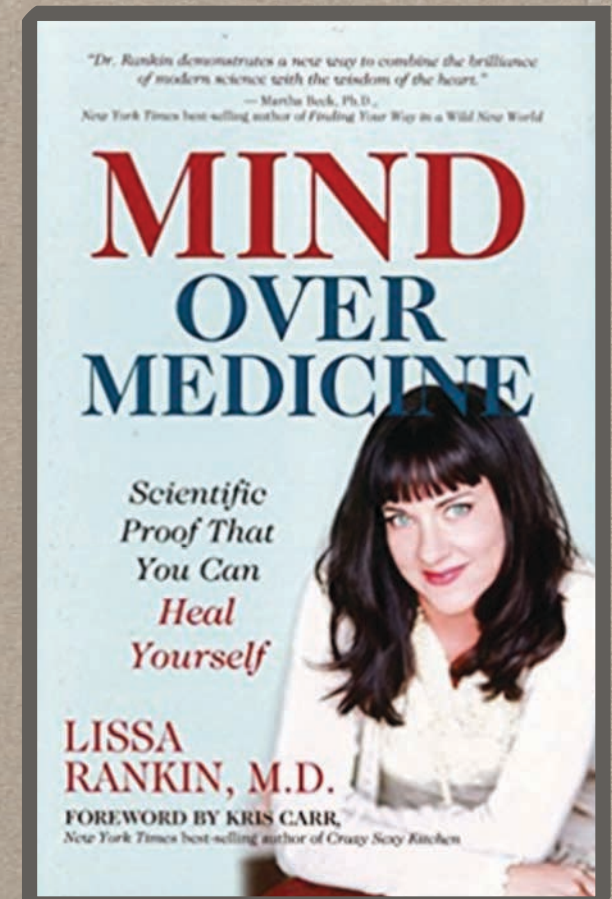
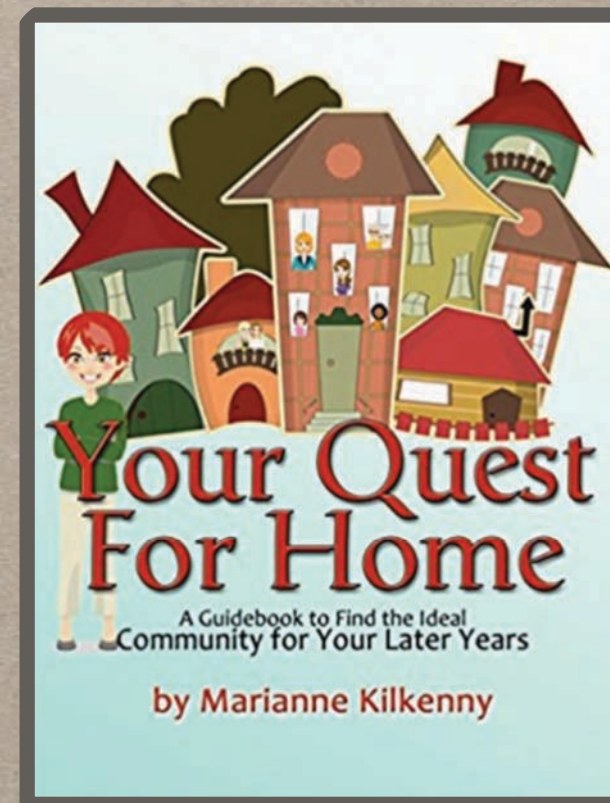
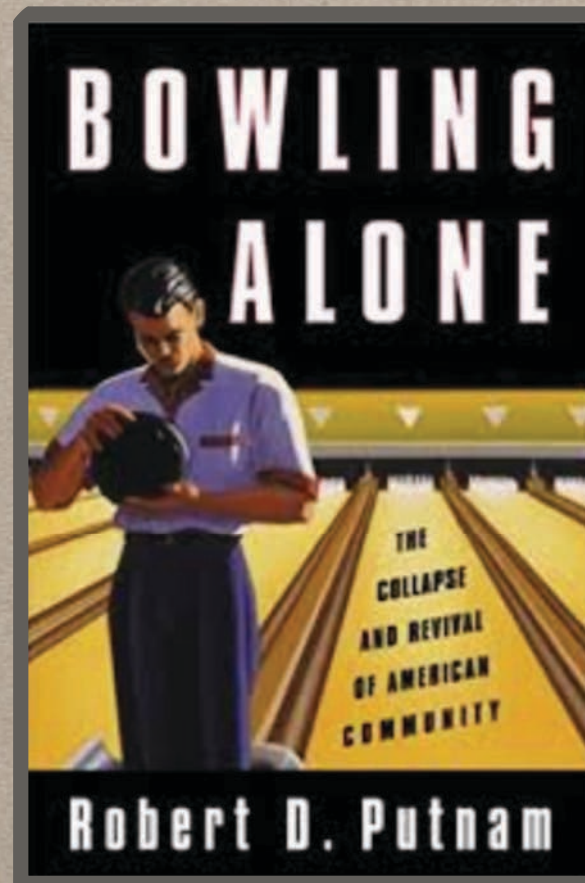
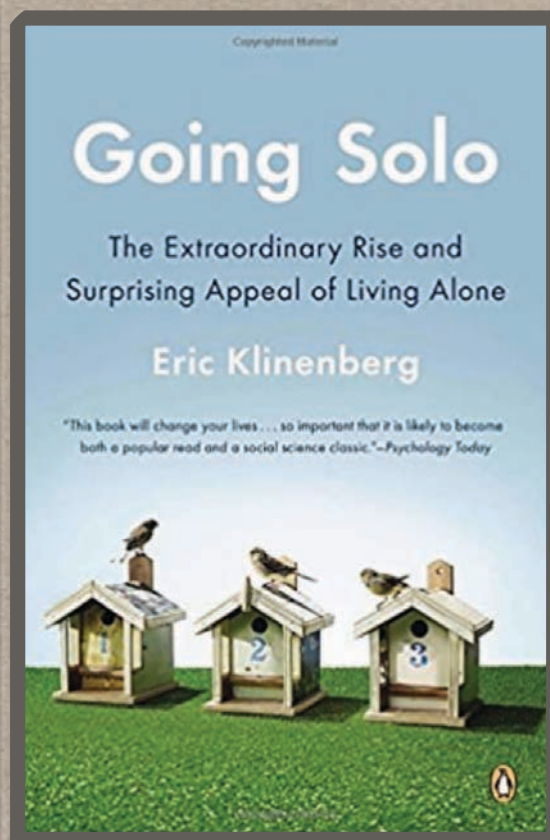
# SPECIALTY HOUSING TYPES THAT OFFER SOCIAL SOLUTIONS

- Cohousing
- Cohouseholding
- Coliving
- Collective houses
- Cooperatives
- Intentional communities





# CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON HOUSING AND THE SOCIAL SPHERE





# CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND THEIR EFFECTS

- For the first time in human history, great numbers of people – at all ages, in all places, of every political persuasion – have begun settling down as singletons.
- We survive our spouses, and do everything we can to avoid moving in with others – including our children. We cycle in and out of different living arrangements: alone, together, together, alone.



# CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND THEIR EFFECTS

- **34.5 million people (28.1%) in the U. S. live alone (2016; up from 17.1% in 1970).**
- As of 2014, 18 million living alone are women and 14 million are men; 16 million are between 35 and 64, 11 million are elderly, and 5 million are between 18-34.
- 110 million (45%) of residents 18 and older not married (2017)
- 7.3 million unmarried-partner households (2015). Of these, 433,539 were same-sex households. 32.1% of people aged 18-34 live in their parents' house, 14% live alone
- Pew research predicts that by the time today's young adults reach the age of 50, about one in four of them will have been single all their life



"Although I am getting used to living on my own, I still think it's not natural. We humans are herd animals. If it were left to me, I'd make us all live in longhouses, like the ones in Nepal, with all the generations packed in together. We've evolved to depend upon each other, we need each other, especially the old. If I were a stone age woman aged 70, I'd never survive on my own. Without the warmth and protection of the tribe around me, the first cold winter would finish me off.."

*-Esther Rantzen, founder of Silver Line, 71*



# **LONELINESS, SOCIAL ISOLATION AND SOLITUDE**



# CONTRASTING LONELINESS WITH SOCIAL ISOLATION

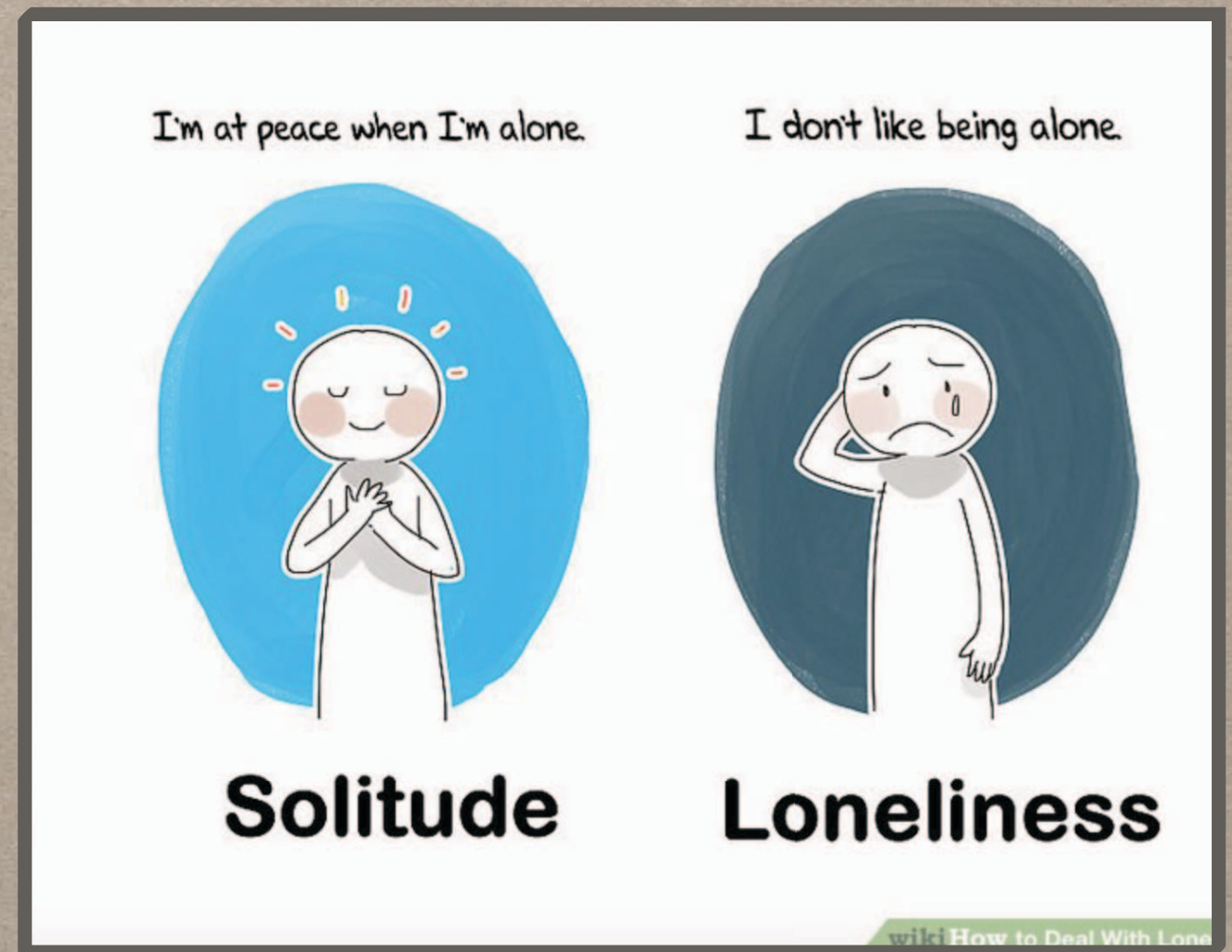
- "Social isolation denotes few social connections or interactions"
- "[L]oneliness involves the subjective perception of isolation—the discrepancy between one's desired and actual level of **social connection**."





# CONTRASTING LONELINESS WITH SOLITUDE

- Loneliness is the subjective feeling of being alone
- Solitude is the conscious act of being alone
- "The cure for loneliness is solitude"





# THE BACKGROUND AND BENEFITS OF SOLITUDE

- Solitude in history
- Solitude and it's relationship with creativity and productivity
- Solitude and the promotion of growth and healing





# STRIKING A BALANCE

- Good design that makes social contact organic and natural and solitude a viable choice
- Involvement of residents in the design, development, decision-making and management
- Common interests, shared activities, life circumstances as key drivers of social interactions
- Mutual support, sharing, and reciprocity—social connection meeting human needs



▲ Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds. Photograph: Josh Barrett/Channel 4



# THE ROLE OF GOOD DESIGN

- A public realm
- Welcoming front porches opening up to a pedestrian walkway
- A private realm
- Back porch that is for alone time, solitude; sheltered, separate





# INVOLVEMENT OF RESIDENTS

- Co-design
- Resident Management
- Non-hierarchical, participative decision-making
- Conflict resolution capability





# COMMON INTERESTS, SHARED ACTIVITIES, LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES

- Common houses, common spaces, gathering points
- Growing, planning, cooking, eating, and all that goes around food
- Playing and celebrating
- Creating, making stuff





# MUTUAL SUPPORT, SHARING, AND RECIPROCITY

- Different kinds of support
  - Expressive
  - Instrumental
  - Informational
  - Appraisal





# **BEST EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS THAT MEANINGFULLY ADDRESS LONELINESS**



# ARBORETUM COHOUSING, MADISON, WI













# **ELDERSPIRIT, ABINGDON, VA**

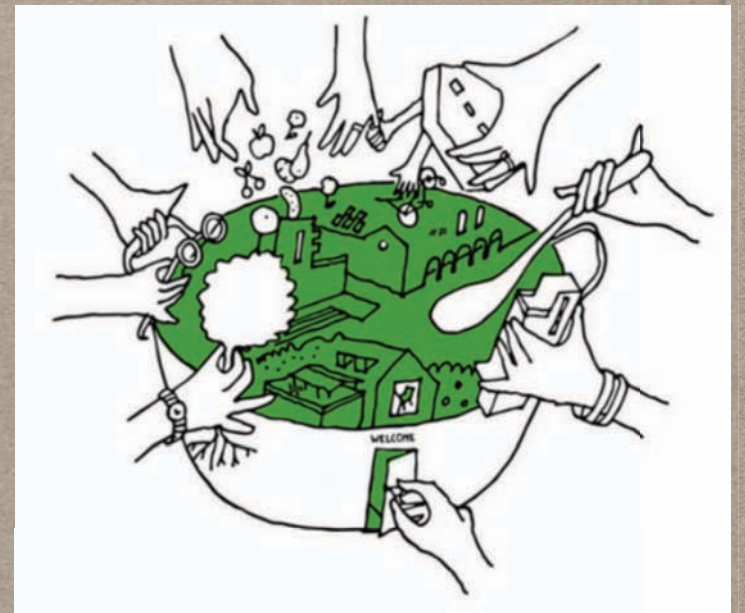








# KLEINE BERGSTRASSE, HAMBURG, GERMANY



REFERENCE/GRAPHIC: [HTTPS://  
COHOUSING-INCLUSIVE.NET/ABOUT-US/](https://cohousing-inclusive.net/about-us/)







# **L'ESPOIR MOLENBEEK, BRUSSELS**







# L'Espoir

**L' Espoir ASBL fête ses 10 ans**

17 septembre 2017 de 13h à 18h  
 5, rue Fin - Jardin Majorelle  
 1080 Molenbeek-Saint-Jean



**EXPOSITION PHOTOS**  
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