

# Counseling Center – Loneliness

Audio	Video
<p><b>[Dr. Cogburn]</b> All right. This is the last episode of the six weeks we have spent with you guys having webinars on Fridays, and then every week we released a brief video about a topic we thought would be important. This week's topic is loneliness. It's really different than the other ones that we've talked about. But if you think about what you guys go through in medical school, not just here for step one dedication, there's a lot of opportunities to be alone.</p> <p>You guys study for hours and then days, weeks, now, months for this dedicated period or podcasting during the medical school years, a lot of chances to be alone, which is not always good. Loneliness is tricky, clinically, because it's so subjective, it's hard to measure. If you're depressed, we can figure out, a set of objectives and criteria to assess that, anxious, the same thing.</p> <p>Loneliness is different for everybody. People can be lonely and be in a room full of people. So, I just thought I'd have a share. A couple of comments I have about loneliness. One, they did a study in 2018, Cigna. And then it was there's another one in the Lancet of 2018 that basically showed the how different groups compare in terms of feeling lonely. So baby boomers, millennials, Gen X, Gen Z, Gen Z, by far, 61% of the 20,000 surveyed described themselves as being more often lonely and for longer periods of time. In fact, people at that time were referring to generation Z as the lonely generation. The irony is, there's so much more social media, Facebook, ability to comment on posts, you know, dating apps, all of those kinds of things that we think are social.</p> <p>But that did not decrease people feeling lonely. If you think about it, being lonely and being alone even is troubling and evolutionary wise, that's not the way we were designed. I mean, we were in groups and that gave us protection. It gave us safety. We had shared workloads. It gave us leadership.</p>	<p>Older man with gray hair and gray beard and mustache. He has on black frame glasses and is wearing a orange and gray, plaid patterned shirt and is seated outside on a porch, in front of a brick wall. (Doctor Cogburn) The screen is vertical from a phone camera</p>

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<p>There are a lot of advantages that got us to this point, in humanity that had the advantages of being in a group. But you guys spend more and more time alone. So let's just take podcasting, for example. You can stay in your pajamas, you can get up late, you can go to bed late. You don't have to eat, you don't have to do any self-care. You can play video games. Nobody's there to watch you. You don't have to stick to a schedule.</p> <p>All of these things contribute to, like, health problems, even. If- there's research that shows people who feel lonely a lot, or alone a lot, do less self-care, which is the equivalent of being obese or, smoking cigarettes. So we know being alone a lot and feeling lonely a lot is not good for you. I have this saying that I use that nobody ever got anywhere without some help.</p> <p>And that's true. If you look at wealthy people, people who have received honors, they'll always cite someone in their life that that person was there for me when I needed them. You know, a lot of, young people today have no stigma about depression or anxiety, but there's still a stigma about being alone and being lonely, as if there's something defective about you that you can't make a friend.</p> <p>You don't know how to interact with people, that there's something wrong with you. And that's the reason that you're lonely and alone. No, that's not true. Even with Covid 19, we even have fewer opportunities to interact with people. So if you look at NASA research, you know, in terms of like things they study about how we're going to get to Mars, what are astronauts going to be like when they're alone?</p> <p>Several things come up. The first thing is they all keep a journal. Every day they write down their thoughts, their feelings. Number two is they, stay on a schedule. Schedules are really, really important. Number three is they develop a hobby. You know, a lot of you guys have pets. And I would consider that a hobby. And it also sort of balances some of this loneliness stuff.</p> <p>But, you know, human interaction and pet interaction is really different. What other things? Volunteering.</p>	Doctor Cogburn talking to camera

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<p>Even if you just go somewhere nonprofit for a day, a month, just feeling connected, like you're giving something back. If you don't feel lonely, but you know, people who are unplugged or disconnected, who probably are, reach out to them. I hear so often, well, I tried to. I was in a group text, and I asked if anybody wanted to go do something, and nobody responded. And that feels like rejection when I suspect most people are just so busy, they don't want to take time to go do any of those things. So I think right now we're super sensitive to being alone and feeling lonely.</p> <p>And that's why I'm talking about this. It's stressful to not be a part of something. We all want to be connected to something. The Student Affairs office has lots of programs that you can be involved in with other students and feel connected, so that's another option for you. If none of these things work and you are feeling lonely, give us a call.</p> <p>6 7 6 5 0 0 2. Again, this is the last of our video blast. We'll have Friday's webinar. And good luck to you on all of your step one endeavors. Thanks. This is Doctor Mark Cogburn.</p>	Doctor Cogburn on camera