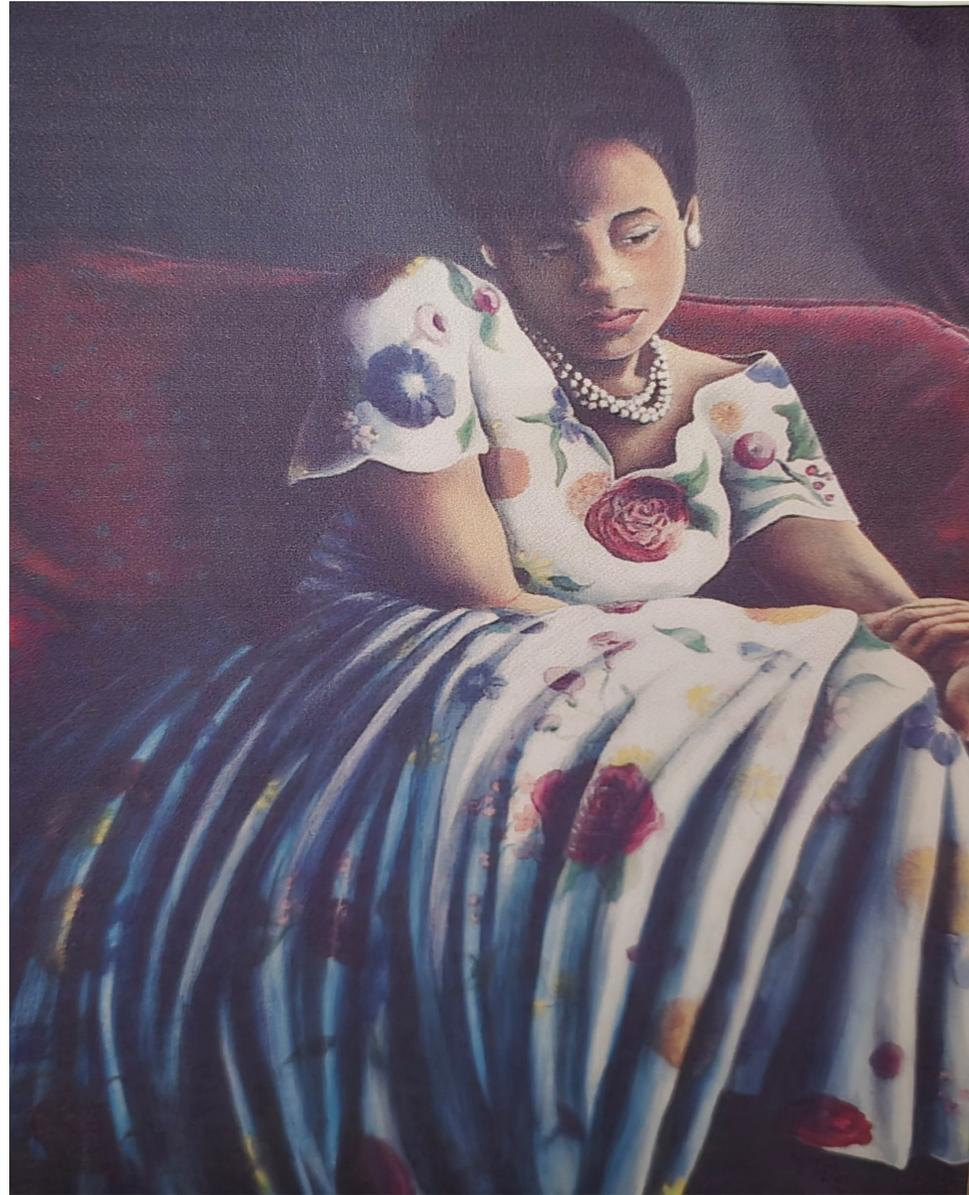# Navigating Loneliness in a Hyperconnected World

"To start friendships and end loneliness someone has to be brave."

An Epidemic of Loneliness

- We live in a world with access to many means of communication/connection, the basis for quality relationship yet many of us are alone and lonely.

- Dr. Vivek Murthy, the Surgeon General has declared loneliness an epidemic in the United States.

- Health care professionals equate it's impact on health with that of smoking fourteen cigarettes per day. It is akin to having a chronic illness.

What is the definition of loneliness? What does it look like?

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

Symptoms of Loneliness

Loneliness is not new, the poem *The Loneliness One dare not Sound* by Emily Dickenson acknowledges it. Social Media facilitated it and The PANDEMIC exacerbated it. The symptoms of loneliness like hunger and thirst alert us that something is missing/wrong. Symptoms specific to loneliness include:

- Depression
- Isolationism
- Anxiety
- Risk Aversion
- Covert Avoidance
- Quietness
- Withdrawal
- Aggression

The Impact of Loneliness on our Quality of Life

Loneliness is implicated in:

- Increased exposure to heart attacks
- Early onset of Alzheimer's
- High Blood Pressure
- Depressed Immunity
- Diabetes
- Cognitive Decline
- Strokes

Data on Loneliness

- 73 % of Americans are single.
- 52% of Americans report feeling lonely.
- District of Columbia is the loneliest place to be in the US, at 70%,
  South Carolina comes in second at 49%,
  Followed by Arizona at 48.89%.
- 40% of folks over 65 say that they are lonely.
- 47% say that their relationships are not meaningful
- 50% of older folks say that tv is their main companion
- 57% report eating alone

- Only 59% of Americans say they have a best friend.

- Las Vegas, Washington DC and Denver are the three loneliest cities in the US. THREE times above the National average.

- Wyoming is the loneliest state per capita, followed by Vermont, Alaska, North Dakota and Delaware.

- Wisconsin is the least lonely state per capita followed by Ohio, Missouri, Indiana and Pennsylvania.

- Of the largest states with populations of at least 8 million, GA, NY, NJ, CA, Virginia, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina, Florida and Texas account for 57% of the lonely in the US.

Three Basic Types of Loneliness

- Intimate – lacking in deep connection to a spouse or best friend
- Relational – dinner dates, birthday parties, watch a game, board games …
- Communal - church, work, volunteering

Who we were and who we are NOW (introvert, extrovert) factor prominently in which type of loneliness we succumb to and whether or how it is addressed.

10 Most identified Reasons for Loneliness

1. Sense of purpose
2. Place in life
3. Divorce
4. Outlived family and friends
5. Single
6. Moved to a new city or state
7. Moved to a nursing home or senior facility
8. Age
9. Mental, intellectual, physical, medical, financial challenges.
10. Fear

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Loneliness

1) **Physiological Needs** – clean air, shelter, food, clothing, sleep, sex.

2) **Safety Needs** – order, predictability, control over one's life.

3) **Love and belonging needs** – closeness, intimacy, community

4) **Esteem needs** – self worth, accomplishment and respect

4) **Self Actualization** - accomplishment of those goals you set for for yourself (or society/family sets for you).

Antidotes to Loneliness : Technology, Plus…

- Smart Tvs
- Smart phones
- FaceBook
- Instagram
- Zoom
- Senior Planet
- TikTok
- X
- Churches
- Senior Centers
- Volunteering
- Reaching out