



# Friendship Event

**Together We Can Attack Loneliness**

35%

**Of People In the US Regularly Feel Lonely**

# Loneliness

- Formally declared 2023 – Vivek Murthy – US Surgeon General
- World Health Organization (WHO): Over 1B people lonely, 781,000 premature deaths annually
- 70 year slide: TV, Suburbs, PCs, Internet, social media, smart phones, Covid19
- Every age group, race, gender, geography, physical, mental, emotional
- Robert Putnam, Harvard, 2001 Bowling Alone
- 2 important movements spawned by loneliness:
  - June 1844 – YMCA formed in London
  - February 1905 – Rotary founded in Chicago

# Loneliness vs. Solitude

- Loneliness is the gap between the social connection you want and what you actually have.
- It is subjective. Two people with identical social lives can report opposite levels of loneliness. What matters is perceived adequacy, not contact frequency.
- It is not the same as being alone. Solitude is chosen. Loneliness is not.
- Solitude restores. You enter it with agency and leave when you want. Loneliness depletes.
- Solitude does not require absence of others. You can feel profound loneliness in a crowded room, a bad marriage or a full workplace. Loneliness is relational, not spatial.

# Statistics

- 1 in 4 people worldwide feel very or fairly lonely, according to the Meta-Gallup 2023 “State of Social Connections” survey of 140 countries.
- \$406 billion annually is the estimated cost of loneliness in lost productivity and increased healthcare cost world wide
- Young people (15–29) report the highest levels of loneliness, especially in high-income countries
- Loneliness is as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day (U.S. Surgeon General, 2023).
- Increases risks:
  - 29% higher risk of heart disease.
  - 32% increased risk of stroke.
  - 50% increased risk of dementia (among older adults).
  - 60% increased risk of early death (meta-analyses from Brigham Young University)
- WHO recent reporting:
  - 1 in 6 lonely (1.35 Billion people)
  - 871,000 deaths annually – equivalent to 100 deaths per hour on a worldwide basis



# Friends Make Everything Better

- Human Connections are key
- People want to connect everywhere
- Being a good friend takes work
- Shared interests/passions enable rapid connections & easy starting point
- Sharing builds trust



# Friendships

- **Dunbar's Number:** Humans can maintain stable social relationships with about 150 people.
- **Inner Circles:** Within that 150, our friendships layer into circles of intimacy:
  - ~5 close friends (intimates you can rely on in crisis).
  - ~15 good friends (close companions).
  - ~50 friends (casual, social circle).
  - ~150 meaningful contacts (extended network).
- **Time Investment:** Friendship depth is directly tied to the amount of time invested in each relationship.
- **Decay Without Contact:** Friendships weaken if not maintained — “out of sight, out of mind” is real.
- **Quality over Quantity:** Emotional closeness predicts happiness more than the total number of friends.
- **Friendship as a Buffer:** Strong friendships buffer against stress, anxiety, and health decline.
- **Laughter & Shared Experience:** Activities like laughter, singing, and shared meals release endorphins that strengthen bonds.
- **Cognitive Constraints:** The limit of ~150 relationships is linked to the size of the human neocortex.
- **Gender Differences:**
  - Women often maintain closeness via conversation.
  - Men often bond through shared activities.
- **Modern Implications:** Social media may expand “contacts” but doesn't expand the number of true friendships we can cognitively and emotionally maintain.

# Friending Habits

- Talk less, listen more
- Mention their name
- Compliment something specific
- Let silence breathe
- Tell stories, skip the data dump
- Make them feel seen
- Leave them glad they met you



# Call To Action

- Take inventory and make a plan for next year
- Call some old friends, meet some strangers
- Host a friendship event!
- Cross generations!
- Reduce TV, video games, social media
- Push your government to do more
- Little efforts add up to big changes!
- Make your neighborhood the friendliest one on the planet
- Give CONEXUS a try!
- <https://friendshipevent.com>



**“We can be the medicine that each other needs.”**

**Dr. Vivek Murthy**

**Thank you**