



YOU'RE NOT ALONE: AVOIDING LONELINESS IN LATER LIFE

**Presenter: Anu Orebiyi, MA, LMHC
PEARLS Counselor
African American Elders Program
Catholic Community Services**

Loneliness Exercise





AARP survey of individuals, 45 and over, completed in 2010, found that up to 35% of the survey respondents reported feeling lonely







HOW DOES LONELINESS IMPACT OUR HEALTH?

Chronic Loneliness (i.e., actual and/or perceived isolation) ...

- Can increase an older individual's chances of premature death by 14%
- Affects several bodily functions due to...
 - Overstimulation of the body's stress response (example: Fight or Flight response)
 - Increased levels of cortisol, a stress-related hormone
 - Higher vascular resistance, which can raise blood pressure and increase blood flow to vital organs
 - Increase the expression of genes associated with inflammation
 - Decrease the expression of genes involved in antiviral expressions ultimately impacting the production of white blood cells



HOW DOES LONELINESS IMPACT OUR HEALTH?

From You Are Not Alone Lightning Talk handout:

“Loneliness and social isolation take a steep toll on the human body. Studies show that people who are chronically lonely have significantly more heart disease, are more vulnerable to metastatic cancer, have an increased risk of stroke and are more likely to develop neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer’s. Lonely adults are 25% more likely to die prematurely. Elderly people who are lonely die at twice the rate as those socially connected... Researchers estimate that 60 million Americans- one fifth of the population-suffer from the pain of loneliness.”

-Excerpt from “The Pain of Chronic Loneliness Can Be Detrimental to Your Health” by Veronique de Turenne, UCLA Newsroom, December 2016



LONELINESS IS NOT JUST A FEELING. IT IMPACTS BOTH OUR MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH.



Western Motel by Edward Hopper



ADDRESSING LONELINESS

- Part 1: Admitting and Recognizing that you feel alone
- Part 2: Remembering that others, also, struggle with loneliness and the importance of building and maintaining high quality relationships
- Part 3: Grace and Self Understanding
 - Remember: Even small steps are big steps, too



ADDRESSING LONELINESS

- Most importantly, it is okay to reach out and ask for help.
 - Some examples:
 - PEARLS (Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives for Seniors)
 - Support Groups
 - Proactively supporting and looking for resources geared towards improving mental health



Thanks!

