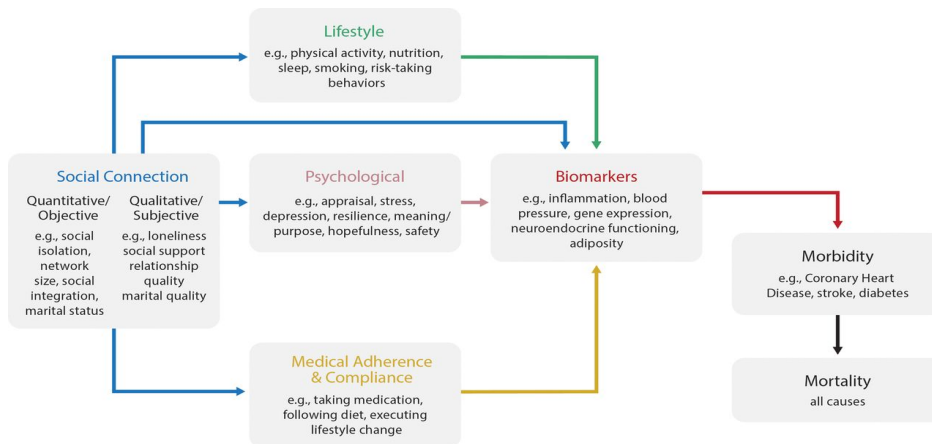
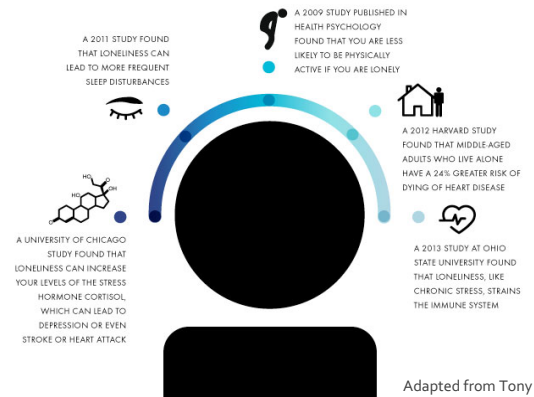


EFFECT OF LONELINESS AND ISOLATION ON YOUR HEALTH

Research has linked loneliness and isolation to higher risks for physical and mental conditions. It can impact overall health as well as brain health. Stress from feeling disconnected and alone can result in depression, anxiety, obesity, a weakened immune system, Alzheimer's disease, high blood pressure, stroke, heart disease and even death. People who find themselves alone unexpectedly due to a loss of a spouse, separation from friends and family or loss of mobility are at particular risk.

SOCIAL ISOLATION & LONELINESS



Isolation Risk Factors

1. Mobility Challenges
2. Loss of driving independence
3. Live in rural areas
4. Ageism
5. Unexpected loss of loved one
6. Lack of social opportunities
7. Financial Independence

Understand the Biology of Loneliness

Losing a sense of connection can change a person's perception of the world. Someone experiencing chronic loneliness feels threatened and mistrustful of others which activates a biological defense mechanism (Steve Cole, PhD, NIA funded research). It can include fear of being robbed, distrust of neighbors and limited meaningful and positive relationships. Loneliness may alter the tendency of cells in the immune system to promote inflammation. This inflammation can be due to rising levels of the stress hormone, cortisol. It can weaken the immune cells that have trouble fighting viruses making them vulnerable to disease.

Why Do our Brains Need at Least 8 Hugs a Day?

Through a hug we can convey joy or sorrow. A hug stimulates the production of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that creates a feeling of satisfaction that relieves stress and tension. A simple hug increases the production of oxytocin which allows us to emotionally connect with others and trust them. "We need four hugs a day to survive, eight hugs for maintenance and 12 hugs for growth." Virginia Satir, MFSW.

