

Can Loneliness Cause Early Death?

We all have heard of the saying that an individual can die of a broken heart, but how true is it? Did you know that being lonely could cause myriad health problems, including sleep disturbances and an increase in blood pressure?

Shocking as it may be, being lonely has twice the risk of causing premature death than obesity, and a recent study conducted by psychologist John Cacioppo supports this.

Who Are the Loneliest People?

Typically, when a person retires from work, he or she experiences a disruption in his or her routine. When work used to take up five days of the week and eight hours or more of the day, having it suddenly stop could cause a lot of physical and psychological changes. The same thing happens if a person loses someone they have been with for a long time. It does cause the broken heart/loneliness syndrome.

What Effects Does Loneliness Have on Health?

Recent research has shown that loneliness impacts health and causes early death as much as being poor does. The finding says that dying early has an increased probability of as much as 19 percent.

According to John Cacioppo, a psychologist and the director of the Center for Cognitive and Social Neuroscience at the University of Chicago, loneliness poses more risk for causing early death significantly more than having or engaging in poor health behavior. He further stated that it is unsafe to be lonely and that it is more than simply being unhappy when he discussed his research at the American Association for the Advancement of Science annual meeting that was held in Chicago

last weekend.

What Are the Research Details?

The research conducted by Cacioppo and his colleagues is designed to pinpoint reasons for the relation of loneliness and early death. To conduct the study, they reviewed the surveyed responses that they got from more than 2,100 adults aged 55 years old and older. It was a health and retirement study, wherein the researchers controlled for gender, age, objective social isolation, poor health behaviors and socioeconomic status.

What Were the Findings?

Designed to know the underlying factors for the relationship of early death and loneliness, the research by Cacioppo and colleagues found out that being lonely and feeling isolated from other persons can lead to an increase in blood pressure, cause a less restorative and restful sleep, hike up the feeling of depression, cause an increase of stress hormone cortisol in the mornings and decrease the overall sense of living a life of meaning. The research also says that aging is hastened by poor sleep quality. It is like that not only does loneliness can cause early death, it can cause a person to age faster too.

More Research Findings From Cacioppo.

Cacioppo says that while some individuals may be happy being alone, as humans, most thrive in social situations where rapport and support with others can be enjoyed. He also says that staying in touch with former colleagues, participating in family activities and maintaining meaningful relationships is how one can escape the clutches of loneliness brought upon by aging. He further states that good times with family and friends are oftentimes taken for granted or underestimated by people.

Another thing that Cacioppo says is that the challenges and stresses of life is more easily managed if a person enjoys companionship, protection and mutual assistance that one can obtain from high quality relationships, and these are the keys to longevity and happiness.

He identifies the factors for loneliness when an individual ages as loss of hearing, blindness and loss of mobility.

According to him, retiring in a warm place like Florida is not enough, but rather what counts is the new relationships that one forges in their place of retirement. The odds of having a long life increases when one has maintained engaging in meaningful activities with other individuals and has quality relationships which he says is related to being able to handle things better and this resulting in less stress.

What Other Experts Say.

Joe Burgo, a psychologist who is the founder of and is the author of *Why Do I Do That?* agrees with how important feeling connected is for people. He says that as relationships end when one grows older and experiences death of family and friends, plus retirement, people not only feel lonely and grieve these losses but it also challenges an individual's sense of self.

He further says that it is critical for every person to remain engaged and active in their world by forging new ties and tending to old ones plus participating in activities that connects with other people.

Summary

Premature death risk is increased by 14 percent in older people who are lonely. Even when one is not elderly, a consistent feeling of being lonely also poses an increase of 14 percent chance of dying early.

Loneliness has as much impact as being very poor and not having access to some privileges.

Staying in touch with friends, families and colleagues can lead to a longer life.

Don Colbert, M.D., is board certified in family practice and in antiaging medicine. He also has received extensive training in nutritional and preventive medicine, and he has helped millions of people discover the joy of living in divine health.

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