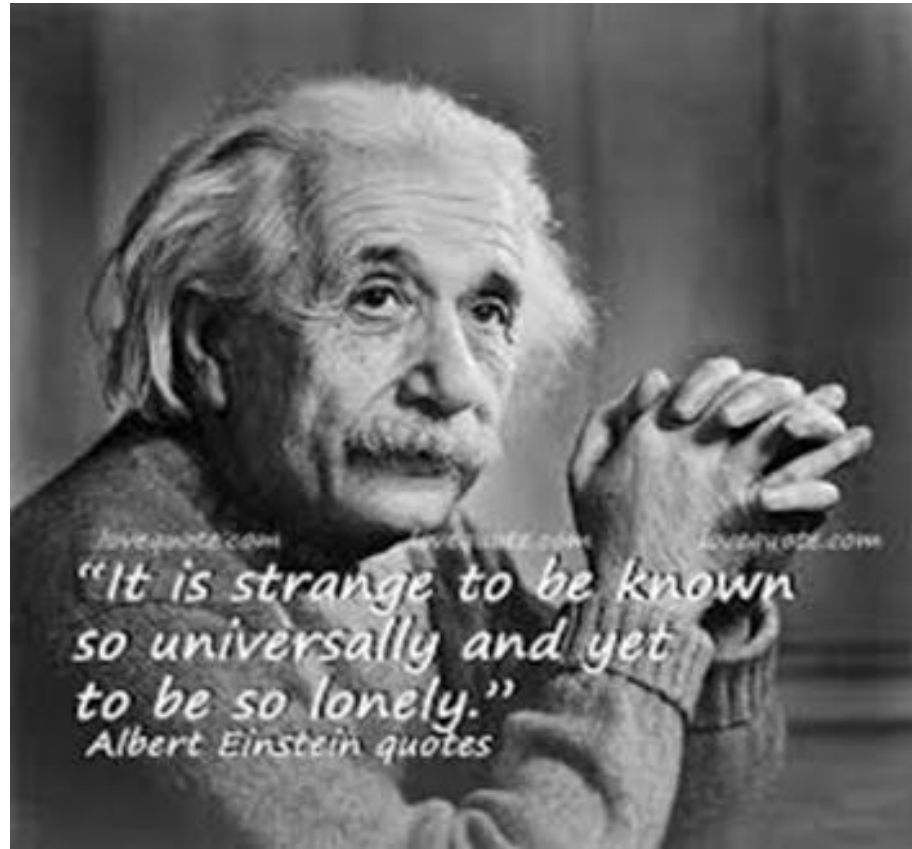


# **The Effects of Loneliness on Seniors**

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*“It is strange to be known  
so universally and yet  
to be so lonely.”*  
*Albert Einstein quotes*

- A stand alone feeling that occurs when an individual feels personal and social needs are not being met
- It is not about being alone
- For seniors it often felt after a situational life experience
- When a person feels lonely, they are not always depressed

## What is Loneliness?



- Can directly impact quality of life
- Poor relationships
- Impaired physical and mental health
- Increased mortality
- Low self-esteem

## Problems of Loneliness

- Feeling lonely for an extended time can have the same effect on the body as smoking 10 cigarettes a day. (University of Chicago, 2011)

- Personal illness
- Changing bodies due to aging, potential decline in abilities
- Illness and loved ones, loved ones change
- Loss of pet

## **Causes of Loneliness – Situational Life Experiences**

- Disconnected or overbearing children
- Financial woes
- Housing transitions
- Feeling as if they are losing control as children take over

## **Causes of Loneliness – Situational Life Experiences**



- Inability to perform regular activities
- Need extra support for everyday living, but are afraid to ask
- Loss of friends
- Feeling of powerlessness
- Loss of appetite

## **Causes of Loneliness – Situational Life Experiences**



- The concept of loneliness is one not easily presented by seniors
- The concept of loneliness is often mistreated as depression
- A lonely senior may find it manifests in physical discomfort

**Loneliness – the “L” word**

- Untreated, long-term loneliness can be a precursor to heart disease, stroke, and cancer. According to Shiovitz-Ezra & Leitsch (2010)

**Loneliness – the “L” word**

- How often do you get out of your house?
- Do you feel sad? How you experienced any changes in your life?
- Do you enjoy your days, your friends?
- What is your relationship like with your family?

## Questions to Identify Loneliness

- How is the quality of your relationships?
- Do you find yourself isolated?
- Are there things you'd like to say, but you don't?
- Do you have worries?

**Questions to Identify Loneliness**

- Did you ever think that you would be chosen to have so many years of experience and wisdom?



**Questions to Identify Loneliness**

- Over 10% of the population over age 65 feels chronic loneliness
- Almost 50% of seniors at a senior center felt lonely some of the time
- If loneliness is identified it can be addressed

## Loneliness Facts



- Identify situational life experiences
- Work with social service agencies to assist in helping the senior
- Recommend social activities, via public centers or religious affiliation
- Prescribe visit to case manager and/or therapist

## Addressing Loneliness

- Addressing loneliness can reduce illness
- Identifying resources for patients can result in wellness
- Without minimizing reason for loneliness, focus on resiliency
- Don't confuse loneliness with isolation or depression, identify life situations

## Addressing Loneliness

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- Tiwari, Sarvada. "Loneliness: A disease?." *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* 55.4 (2013): 320. Health Reference Center Academic. Web. 27 Apr. 2015.

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