Who Am I? Why Loneliness?

- Assistant Teaching Professor in Sociology
- Affiliate Faculty in Gerontology, Criminal Justice, and Social Work- teach classes on loneliness at Charlotte
- Community engagement focused
- Student centered
- Personal experience with loneliness- "You are not alone"
- Welcome every opportunity to talk about loneliness
- Set the career goal of being an expert on loneliness

What is Loneliness?

- Loneliness is a mismatch between the number of quality relationships on feel that they have versus the number of quality relationships one thinks one has.
    - Loneliness (aka social disconnection) is subjective, dynamic, and the absence of loneliness does not equate with feeling socially connected to others.
    - Loneliness is on a continuum or gradient. Individuals have different thresholds.
- Solitude is the luxury of feeling socially connected, but choosing to spend time alone.

Trends in Loneliness

- Loneliness has been increasing for decades.
- During the pandemic, loneliness developed popularity in the public discourse implying loneliness is "novel" and "new". It is not
- Rates of self report loneliness among Gen Z range from 61% to 79%.
- *Gen Z is the loneliest generation…Why?*

Causes of Loneliness

- Lack of participation in social events, civic and religious services and events
- Prolonged usage of technology
- Living independently
- Multiple transitions during this life stage
- Access to streaming services
- Reliance on technology for decision making
- Erosion of social trust

Outcomes of Loneliness for Gen Z

- Physical and mental health outcomes
  - Physical e.g. weakened immune system
  - Mental e.g. increased likelihood of depression
- Signs and Symptoms
  - Anxiety, demanding and critical behavior, lack of confidence and self esteem, missed classes, submitting late work and disengagement with class and assignments

Career Challenges

- Impacted development of soft skills (aka durable skills)
  - What are soft skills?
    - Soft skills refer to personal attributes, communication abilities, and interpersonal skills that help individuals work effectively and harmoniously with others.
    - Examples of soft skills include, but are not limited to communication, team work, problem solving, adaptability, work ethic, networking, conflict resolution, leadership, and emotional intelligence.

How do we help students?

- Classroom opportunities
  - "Service is the antidote to loneliness"
  - Reserve 5-10 minutes of class time for "freewrites
  - Reference the career skills categories to connect certain class activities or assignments to career goals
  - Create assignments and class activities with prompts or case studies for small groups to practice collaborating
  - Collaborations in online classes—there are answers!
  - Small group discussions during class time (i.e., practice talking to each other)
- Familiarize ourselves with Career Center services
  - Call/Email if you have a question or do not know

How do we help students?

- Invite Career Center to our classrooms
  - Ask students to prepare a question to ask during/after their talk
  - Request specific focus for class periods or club meetings
- Create class activity requiring students to interact with the Career Center
  - Scavenger hunt
  - Develop a LinkedIn page (ask your students to follow you on LinkedIn; tag them in photos as ask them to repost; encourage them to post)

How do we support student success?

- Mentorship for a Honors or Capstone Project
  - Set up a meeting with the student to talk about how they can incorporate learned skill sets into their resume
- Invite students to participate in community work you are engaged
  - As a participant on a panel (i.e., an "Invited Talk")
  - Connect them with community internships
  - Professional Development opportunities
- Encourage Networking with campus events
  - Sometimes students simply need a confidence boost!

How do we help students?

- ## Conference Attendance
  - Offer to work with students on professionalism pre-conference
  - Teach how to actively participate in conference.
  - Provide information on network and follow up
  - Offer to drive them to a conference and ask if undergraduate research offices can financially support student registration fees
  - Write and send a follow up email with career resources for major and how to include their participation in their resume
  - Share your CV with students and walk through the format
- ## Encourage, Support, Encourage, Support!

Q&A
Thank you for your engagement!

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