

MS Podcast - Loneliness Transcript

00:00:04:02 - 00:00:27:18

Leslie Schachter

Hi. Welcome to the Vitals, Mount Sinai Health System's newest video podcast. I'm your host, Leslie Schachter, a neurosurgery physician assistant here at Mount Sinai Hospital. Today we're talking about loneliness. What is loneliness? What causes loneliness? And how can we treat loneliness? Turns out people don't usually make appointments because they're feeling lonely. They might call and speak to a lot of doctor's offices because they're lonely.

00:00:27:18 - 00:00:53:11

Leslie Schachter

But it's kind of a difficult diagnosis. But we do have specialists that can help diagnose loneliness and treat people appropriately. So we have three guests with us today. First, I'd like to welcome Doctor Fernando Carnevale, associate professor and internal medicine doctor Sean Rhodes, assistant professor of psychiatry and neuroscience, and doctor Leah Marin, assistant professor of psychiatry. Let's thank you so much for being here.

00:00:53:13 - 00:00:54:07

Fernando Carnavali

Pleasure.

00:00:54:09 - 00:01:00:01

Leslie Schachter

So did I intro that the right way? Nobody's really calling and saying, hey, I'm lonely. Can I come in for a consult? Right.

00:01:00:03 - 00:01:01:22

Fernando Carnavali

Yes. You're right.

00:01:02:00 - 00:01:02:16

Leslie Schachter

Yeah, but.

00:01:02:18 - 00:01:03:14

Fernando Carnavali

That's not happen.

00:01:03:15 - 00:01:20:09

Leslie Schachter

It's masked in other things. Correct. Yeah. So we'll get to talking about that today. Let's just first

go around the table and let's, in your own words, I want each of you guys to define your internal medicine. And you guys both specialize in psychiatry. Define loneliness the best that you can.

00:01:20:11 - 00:01:41:02

Fernando Carnavali

I think the best way that I would define it just follow the, you know, surgeon General approach to this, which is like really make a differentiation with the feeling of, you know, we have a normal concept of feeling blue is just not like that. It's a little more complex like that and has some components that are just part of the society.

00:01:41:02 - 00:01:55:10

Fernando Carnavali

It's not just only an individual problem. So it's complex is and is subjective. Correct. I mean, that's the difference between, the social isolation and loneliness. It's just one is subjective. The other one is not.

00:01:55:12 - 00:01:58:10

Leslie Schachter

Okay. What what about you? How would you define loneliness?

00:01:58:12 - 00:02:24:13

Lea Marin

Absolutely. I would agree. It's about this subjective experience of feeling that you are lacking the amount of connection that would be meaningful and supportive to you. And I think that different people have different needs. And often that can change over the course of their lives. Right. So needing more support, needing less support. And so I think that it's important to realize that it can be really a continuum of, what loneliness can feel like.

00:02:24:13 - 00:02:41:20

Lea Marin

And sometimes loneliness can also be an okay thing, right? Sometimes loneliness can be a good thing. It can encourage us to, you know, engage more and reach out to people you know and be a motivator to be socially engaged. But I think it's when it's pervasive and continuous that that's when loneliness can become a problem.

00:02:41:20 - 00:03:16:03

Shawn Rhoads

Okay. Yeah. Subjective experience. It's a it's kind of like an experience of distress really too I would say this distress that you're lacking, social connection, which is, I would say a primary reward for a lot of us, just like we would, want to eat. Right? It's kind of, very similar to that. Right? And we've kind of evolved in a way, where loneliness is like a pretty good, protective mechanism where we could, it kind of motivates us to go out and seek social interactions when we feel or perceive that we don't have them.

00:03:16:05 - 00:03:25:01

Leslie Schachter

So the now former surgeon general, Doctor Vivek Murthy, called loneliness a public health crisis. So what evidence do we have to support that claim?

00:03:25:03 - 00:03:46:09

Fernando Carnavali

There's plenty of evidence and there are several articles, you know, and but well, we know that from the report that we have two years to go by now, I think it's 2023, if I'm correct. So, you know, from cardiovascular health impact, mental health impact, obviously, and also infectious diseases impact. So we have impact on almost every single department.

00:03:46:09 - 00:04:04:07

Fernando Carnavali

When you think about your health individually. And the impact also is only about the society in general. And that's sort of something that we do not think. But it really is reflected sometimes in productivity of work performance in school. So it just goes beyond the individual.

00:04:04:09 - 00:04:09:05

Leslie Schachter

Who, who is the most affected, like other age groups that are more affected than others.

00:04:09:06 - 00:04:26:05

Lea Marin

So I think that it tends to be right now we're seeing a really large cohort in younger adults. But as a geriatric psychiatrist, I would say that I see it all the time in older adults. And I think that's sort of a second population that also experiences a lot of isolation and then also loneliness.

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Leslie Schachter

So break that up. Let's just focus on the younger crowd first. That's sad. Why, why, why is the younger crowd lonely?

00:04:33:10 - 00:04:56:14

Lea Marin

I think there are a lot of theories behind it, and I think a lot of people like to sort of blame technology a lot of the time and how, having that be sort of omnipresent in their lives from such a young age, it's really impacted their social relationships, their ability to engage. I don't like to look at technology as being all good or all bad, because I also think it can actually really foster a lot of connection as well.

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Lea Marin

But I think another thing that has really impacted younger adults was being young and also in the midst of Covid.

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Leslie Schachter

Right?

00:05:03:22 - 00:05:24:16

Lea Marin

Right. So I think that that was definitely a really big impact on this generation. Feeling isolated and lonely, you know, that the times, you know, in high school, in college when we really, you know, have so many social connections and it's such a formative time to have that and be doing it alone in your room. I think it has really impacted that generation.

00:05:24:16 - 00:05:27:05

Leslie Schachter

What's the difference for like the geriatric population?

00:05:27:05 - 00:05:51:21

Lea Marin

So in the geriatric population, you know, I feel that sometimes it's due to many of your social connections passing away. Right. I think sometimes it has to do with sometimes and not certainly not for everyone. But sometimes your world can get smaller, right? You retire so you don't have those connections at work. You know, maybe family moves away, maybe your spouse died or so.

00:05:51:21 - 00:05:54:21

Leslie Schachter

Maybe you leave your home in New York and move to Florida, which, yeah.

00:05:55:02 - 00:06:11:12

Lea Marin

You know, seems like an awesome choice on a cold day. But, you know, and but I also think that a lot of the time, medical conditions make, you know, can isolate us. You know, I had a patient the other day sort of saying that they didn't want to go to a show because they were worried about their ambulation and sort of having to walk with a cane.

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Lea Marin

And, you know, would it be a problem in that setting? And I think that certain things that you know, that conditions that happen to older adults also gets in the way in their ability to, you know, have robust social connection?

00:06:22:04 - 00:06:32:16

Leslie Schachter

A lot of my patients postoperatively if they have a deficit or they're walking differently or they're embarrassed by a walker, they'll stay home. They do not leave. They're embarrassed by how they their their mobility now.

00:06:32:21 - 00:06:54:05

Fernando Carnavali

And independently of those at times, you know, it's just the medications that we prescribe, you know, and perhaps give some side effects that limit the way that you go through your day and the way that you plan where to go. And we're good to go. Perhaps you're taking a pain medication and you're very tired by APM and that's that, you know, so there are like definite limitations.

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Fernando Carnavali

I think that from the report well, we learned that is is these numbers of the younger people that it's just like dramatic perhaps the older generations, the older the more senior people. This was just always there. And I mean, I'm thinking about always there, but we know it's just like, you know, when we talk about loneliness, just reading the Bible could write them in Genesis.

00:07:19:05 - 00:07:41:11

Fernando Carnavali

You know, they talking about that the Beatles with Penny Lane and Justin Bieber, you know, a couple of years ago, she's so over. It's not that new thing. It's just like, perhaps the concern about loneliness in the history of the world. But I think that, we have we're more aware now and, and we have the data that perhaps you know, we didn't have before.

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Leslie Schachter

What are the what brain effects are there from loneliness? Does this cause like a chronic brain condition?

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Shawn Rhoads

I don't know if it's entirely conclusive what, the brain effects are. I know, it's been linked to, like, more inflammation. For example, I think one did responses to, like, social cues, for example, has been shown.

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Leslie Schachter

So can you compare that to like, let's say loneliness is difficult, right? Is there an ICD ten code

for loneliness?

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Fernando Carnavali

You bet.

00:08:14:15 - 00:08:25:07

Leslie Schachter

There is. Okay. I don't use it myself, but there is. Okay. What other socially acceptable diagnosis is there that would be like similar to loneliness?

00:08:25:09 - 00:08:53:17

Lea Marin

I think a lot of the time people come in discussing symptoms of depression, symptoms of anxiety, and that that often when you sort of ask them a little bit more about what's going on, it turns out that really what's going on here is loneliness. That being said, you were sort of asking what brain conditions? We know that loneliness increases your risk of depression, increases your risk of anxiety, increases your risk of cognitive impairment, increases your risk of your cognitive impairment worsening if you remain socially isolated.

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Lea Marin

So there are definitely a lot of ways that we sort of see the two things influencing each other.

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Leslie Schachter

So you just said that loneliness can increase the risk for depression and all these other things. Does it work the other way around?

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Lea Marin

Absolutely. Right. So I think that a lot of the time when people are depressed, one of the cardinal symptoms we see is anhedonia, a lack of enjoyment, a lack of desire, you know, to, to, to do the things that they used to do. They have low energy. So it's hard for them to get out of the house. There are so many things in depression that can contribute to isolating yourself and then ultimately that leading to loneliness.

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Leslie Schachter

Okay, so let's just focus on the undying. Like not depression, no anxiety, no PTSD, just, you know, a healthy patient who is experiencing loneliness. How do you pick that up in your patients without maybe they're they don't even know it. And then how do you go about treating that?

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Fernando Carnavali

It's a good question. I mean, like, I know what you're thinking about. Well, we can think about perhaps it just, going more into the elderly population and for example, when they are just not moving around thus much correct. All of a sudden they are it's like, as you said, some stability is just lost. And all of a sudden they have, they're not as comfortable going out for a walk, you know, and, and and again, in the normal conversation, it's just you start exploring, what are they feeling with this decrease in motion that they having and their ability to go out.

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Fernando Carnavali

And I think that then you explore that I, I do no, no, I do not know to what extent you don't end up with some degree of, of depression or anxiety or just if you want to call it adjustment disorder. I the beginning, I think.

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Leslie Schachter

What's an adjustment disorder?

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Fernando Carnavali

I feel that we have the experts here.

00:10:40:03 - 00:10:42:09

Leslie Schachter

So what's an adjustment disorder. What does that mean.

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Lea Marin

So an adjustment disorder is often a constellation of symptoms that can look a lot like depression, can look a lot like anxiety, but don't meet full criteria for a major depressive episode or generalized anxiety disorder. And it's in the context of an acute stressor.

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Leslie Schachter

So when you say I'm going to pull back, even more so for the people watching this, there are people like I, I don't suffer from I don't have depression, I don't have anxiety, but I can feel depressed and I can have anxiety. Right. So there are actual diagnoses of these things. And that is there's criteria for DSM. What number are we at now?

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Leslie Schachter

Five, five, DSM five is a book where there's criteria that then meet a diagnosis.

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Lea Marin

And I think the thing that is, like you said, you're being human means sometimes feeling lonely or sometimes feeling sad or sometimes feeling anxious. That's all part of our normal human experiences. But what the DSM says, sort of again and again, when you're reading the criteria, it's and it results in an impairment in functioning. Right, right. So it's about when these normal human experiences and emotions result in, you're no longer being able to function in your life the way you were before you were having these symptoms.

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Lea Marin

And that they have to be sort of pervasive and constant.

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Leslie Schachter

So back to the patient in your office, because you're in internal medicine, you're kind of like the front line for these people. And you want to help someone. What are like your basic recommendations to help someone kind of get out of loneliness?

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Fernando Carnavali

See the question. And that's I think that that's the reason that we're here. I mean, do we have recommendations? And I think that the recommendation is important are at the level of the individual. But what are the resources that we have in society? And that's sort of the tricky part. And I think that we're not there yet. We don't have, the skills develop enough to have all this information available.

00:12:31:05 - 00:12:46:19

Fernando Carnavali

I mean, do we know what New York City has to offer next weekend? Can we tell? Yeah. And I don't know, one of the top of my head. Or, perhaps we should start, you know, having those, tools available. I think that we can do much better.

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Lea Marin

And I think that we know that loneliness. If there's all these statistics, you know, loneliness is equal to smoking 15 cigarets a day, right? It's equal to drinking six drinks a night. And all the time we're screening for. Do you smoke? Do you drink? And I think that part of that should be. Are you lonely? And then sort of following the same trajectory of the way we treat someone who comes in with that, right?

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Lea Marin

Someone comes in and they're smoking cigarettes, you know, you sort of you educate them here, the harms that can come from it.

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Leslie Schachter

Can you just say that statistic one more time? Being lonely is the equivalent of.

00:13:18:09 - 00:13:24:01

Lea Marin

Smoking 15 cigarettes a day, which is a pack. And, three quarters of a pack.

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Leslie Schachter

Three quarters of a pack. I'm glad. I don't know how many cigarettes are in a pack.

00:13:27:01 - 00:13:47:13

Lea Marin

You're 20 cigarettes in a pack. So 15 cigarettes is a lot. It's a lot of cigarettes a day or six alcoholic drinks a day. Wow. Which is much higher than the recommended, you know, safe amount. And so if someone comes, it came into my office and was saying they smoked 15 cigarettes a day. I would say, okay, well, let's talk about what the potential health consequences of that could be.

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Lea Marin

And then I would assess their readiness to change. Right. Because I'm not going to say, okay, well, you know, we can start Chantix, we can do this, we can do that when it's like, I don't want to I don't want to make a change. And I think that we should follow the same process with screening for loneliness, the way we screened for substance use and then assess, you know, educating on, you know, it's this this, you know, has a greater risk of, you know, increased risk of premature death, increased risk of cardiovascular illness, increased risk of psychiatric illness.

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Lea Marin

And, you know, have you thought about ways to change your life that may help? We hope may help with your loneliness. Are you interested in making a change? And then I think the important thing is you were sort of asking what? You know, what can we refer people to? And I think that a lot of the time it's sort of I like to see what the patients can come up with.

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Lea Marin

Right. As opposed to me saying, okay, here's a list of 15 senior centers in your area. You should go over here or go over here. That's a lot less likely to have them actually follow through and do

it than for me to say, okay, well, like, can you tell me what are some things that you think you could do?

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Leslie Schachter

Or what did you used to like doing? What used to make you happy?

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Lea Marin

What used to make you happy? Or is there something that you've wanted to try? Or is there someone in your life who you think that you could reach out to more, right? Or what's getting in the way of your reaching out to them more?

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Leslie Schachter

Does loneliness affect decision making and like cognitive decline?

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Shawn Rhoads

You know, I think the decision to, for example, go out and seek social connections. So in decision making, right, we have kind of this like expected, outcomes, right. Based on our behaviors in the world.

00:15:23:15 - 00:15:39:17

Leslie Schachter

The brain is studied on imaging with neurodegenerative diseases like traumatic injuries. Have we, like, studied the brain of lonely people and lonely people? Not that have, like depression and anxiety, but lonely people. Just lonely people. Period. Have we look at those brains?

00:15:39:21 - 00:16:10:17

Shawn Rhoads

Yeah. So actually I think there's kind of two there's people who are like, kind of chronically lonely, and then there's people that are kind of like transient lonely, like, you know, the short term loneliness. There have been studies and both. One really interesting study is where, they basically took people and they had them socially isolate for 12 hours and then looked at their brain responses, to, different social cues like social interactions.

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Shawn Rhoads

And they also had the same people, fast, from food for, 12 hours and then look at like, social cues. And they found that, people who were lonely, like, experimentally, experimentally manipulated loneliness, these people who are lonely had very similar neural responses to those social cues as they would after being, after fasting and responding to food.

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Shawn Rhoads

And.

00:16:36:15 - 00:16:39:23

Fernando Carnavali

So this is about intermittent fasting. Now.

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Leslie Schachter

I will tell you, somebody told me that I cannot communicate with a living soul for 12 hours. My brain would be so happy at the end of that 12 hours. I mean, I'm the opposite of a lonely person. Like, what is the opposite of lonely? Like, overly happy.

00:16:51:20 - 00:16:57:04

Lea Marin

But I think that solitude, right, is a state of being content with being lonely.

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Fernando Carnavali

Being alone again. So we talked about the objectivity of it. So like, you know, we're talking about this. It's like how actively you do not feel comfortable with where you are. And that's sort of like the loneliness that we're talking about. But I think I just going back to what we said before, I think I would not be surprising for anybody that this is stigma regarding that.

00:17:18:23 - 00:17:37:08

Fernando Carnavali

I know that you mentioned about screening people since loneliness is a feeling and is the feeling is from your neck up. I don't have to tell you, but it's just like mental health of any sort even is a reference to it is not really widely accepted and it's just frowned upon. Yeah. Why are you asking me those questions for?

00:17:37:08 - 00:18:03:09

Fernando Carnavali

Yeah. So we have problems sometimes asking what we use, which is these like two questions to screening for depression. And people at times do not feel so I think that what I agree that we need to screen, I don't know if we even have the tool to do it right. And, and again, all these tools will be different if you ask me with my background, you with your background and so on and so forth.

00:18:03:09 - 00:18:04:20

Fernando Carnavali

So it's a very complex.

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Lea Marin

When someone's sitting in my office, they have very different expectations about what I'm going to ask them than when they're sitting in your office.

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Fernando Carnavali

Completely.

00:18:11:02 - 00:18:26:05

Lea Marin

Right. And so but I do think that we're all getting a social history. And so sometimes I feel that maybe not even asking, do you feel lonely? But asking who are your social supports? Right. You know, and sometimes it can come up in different ways. And I'm sure that when you have people coming out of surgery, you know who's who's going to come go.

00:18:26:05 - 00:18:45:04

Leslie Schachter

I can tell right away. I mean, part of surgical recoveries, who's going to pick you up, who's going to be there? I have patients who have no friends. They're widowed. That's first of all, that's a difficult social discharge. But I can tell who my lonely patients are because they call for everything. They call that if they if their toe hurts, if they have a fever of 99.0.

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Leslie Schachter

I mean, I hear we end, you know, because I just want to call and talk to someone.

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Lea Marin

And I think the other part of that is also we were talking about sort of the relationship between loneliness and anxiety. Right, right. And so they may also be the patients who are more, you know, concerned and maybe can't get, you know, in the same way that I would maybe turn to my husband and say, you know, like, you know, I'm just spending like, oh, you know, it's okay, you know, but if you don't have that sort of support built into your life and you're looking, you know, looking to your doctors for.

00:19:09:16 - 00:19:31:11

Fernando Carnavali

It instead, it's a very interesting point that you bring in, because in their report that we were mentioning before, they talking about like how families have changing in and how many people are just not married as before and again, sort of not really, you know, say, hey, everybody

should get married tomorrow. But well we pointing out that you're more isolated when you have this problem.

00:19:31:11 - 00:19:53:09

Fernando Carnavali

You're in the middle of the night and your heart hurts and you think that you have an MRI. I see different thing, as you just said, if you have Peter or Mary or whoever by your sense, like I have a chest pain and all of a sudden it's just again, it can be a big problem. But having somebody to just like, share the experience makes a significant difference.

00:19:53:11 - 00:20:09:09

Lea Marin

And it plays a role in terms of how loneliness can contribute to mortality. Right. So visuals who have a heart attack and who have a spouse or someone else in the house to sort of, you know, get medical attention or find them, you know, are much more likely to survive, right. You know, I think it impacts hospital readmissions, right.

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Lea Marin

You know, I'm sure that after after.

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Leslie Schachter

Hospital discharge.

00:20:12:09 - 00:20:44:04

Lea Marin

Hospital discharge for readmission, and, you know, ultimately, you know, it's and to sort of go back to what you were saying, you know, there's a changes in terms of, you know, fewer nuclear family is more people living alone. But then there also changes in terms of the way that people engage in their communities. Right. You know, I think that a lot of my older patients, you know, grew up at a time where, you know, they were much more involved in religious communities in, you know, unions in, you know, all sort of, you know, Oddfellows Club, all these sorts of things that don't really exist anymore to sort of as places to build community

00:20:44:04 - 00:20:44:14

Lea Marin

in the same.

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Leslie Schachter

Okay. So let's bring social media into this now. Great. Because I'm so grateful that I grew up when I didn't even have email in high school. I got it in college. I didn't have my first smartphone

until my 20s. I don't know what it's like to grow up on social media. So how are people more lonely when social media or less lonely with social media?

00:21:07:22 - 00:21:09:14

Lea Marin

I think it depends on the person.

00:21:09:19 - 00:21:28:23

Shawn Rhoads

Yeah, I think in some ways social media has made us more connected than ever before. Right. But I guess it's like it might be the face to face, interactions that are less frequent and there's a little bit more of like, non like being anonymous online, as well. But yeah.

00:21:29:01 - 00:21:30:14

Leslie Schachter

So I can imagine it's person dependent.

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Lea Marin

It's person dependent. But it's also I think many people will have both. Right. You know, I think that sometimes it's not just the social media. It's like when I'm out to dinner with my friends, I'm checking my phone. And that's decreasing the, you know, the quality.

00:21:42:19 - 00:21:43:02

Fernando Carnavali

Yeah.

00:21:43:05 - 00:22:07:00

Lea Marin

Oh, right. So, so and so even when you are having those in-person, you know, oh let's take a picture for, you know, and sort of being less in the moment. You know, so I think that there are impacts there, but there are definitely ways, I think, in which, you know, speaking of our older patients with limited mobility, you know, the ability to see me virtually, the ability to do a group therapy with other people, the ability to join a support group, right.

00:22:07:01 - 00:22:27:07

Lea Marin

Where, you know, I've many patients who go to AA virtually every single day. Yeah, right. And, you know, I don't think technology is, you know, it's all good or it's all bad. But, you know, in terms of like children, you know, I, I like my school for my kid's school, you know, has a policy about sort of waiting until eighth grade until the kids start, you know, start having phones.

00:22:27:11 - 00:22:46:04

Lea Marin

And I think that there's something about sort of that community coming together and making a decision about when, when kids can start having phones, when they can start using social media so that every, you know, they do get a chance to have this childhood and that and the social skills without having, you know, well, let me check my phone in the middle of this conversation.

00:22:46:06 - 00:23:10:21

Fernando Carnavali

I hear the bottom line is that there's not enough data. I mean, and some of the data is very concerning. I think that we all read them cyber exist and it's a problem. And we have had, you know, people committing suicide because of that. So we know that that exists. Do we have enough data to see the impact and to measure, I guess that, you know, as you said, you did not grow up with one of this, right?

00:23:10:23 - 00:23:33:16

Fernando Carnavali

So what about the people that are growing up with these? What will be the impact in 20 years or 30 years or 50 years? We have no clue. I mean, it's the bottom line. It is just a fight, you know, on. And regarding, the destruction, you know, I remember, you know, being with friends for the first time, I have just like, the old fashioned wristwatch that I love so much.

00:23:33:18 - 00:23:43:13

Fernando Carnavali

But many people have the Apple Watches. So the first time that I was sitting down with somebody when Apple Watch and the person was just gone, at least said, okay, do I have to go? What is this.

00:23:43:16 - 00:23:45:01

Leslie Schachter

Like, am I that boring? You know.

00:23:45:01 - 00:24:01:01

Fernando Carnavali

I'm not poor. You know, it's just like, no, which is the messages that we're just getting into that it took me like half an hour to realize that, actually. I ask what's going on? It's like, can you talk to me? You need to go. We just reschedule? Yeah. No, no, I'm just checking my emails.

00:24:01:01 - 00:24:08:19

Leslie Schachter

Were they me about that? That even that is like. Like I'm not important enough to keep eye contact. You have to keep looking to see who it was.

00:24:08:22 - 00:24:28:04

Fernando Carnavali

But it just changes. They don't 75 changes correctly. The vibe is not there anymore somewhere somewhat. So I agree with you. I so what's the impact of me being exposed to that and that relationship? It's just a question mark with the knowledge now. But it has like some concerning angles I think so.

00:24:28:04 - 00:24:46:02

Leslie Schachter

So there's the good of social media and technology and such and then the bad. What about things like smoking cannabis, alcohol, like a lot of those, like doing those things, coming together and meeting for a drink and socializing and maybe drinking a little too much or whatever, that's great. But it's also not good for you. Is it like the same idea?

00:24:46:06 - 00:25:04:17

Lea Marin

Yeah, I think it's the same thing. Right? You know, I mean, alcohol can be a social lubricant and can sort of, you know, help bring people together. Or maybe you're part of a community bar. But we also know that sometimes it can have people, you know, sometimes often it can have negative consequences as well. So I think it's about, you know, what kind of what is healthy for this person in this moment.

00:25:04:17 - 00:25:20:04

Lea Marin

Right. And that can be very different from what what is healthy for you, what is healthy for me. And I think it's the same thing with relationships to social media with with phone use, you know, and I think that like, yes, we absolutely know that certain things in social, you know, that social media has been associated with increased risk of anxiety and depression and all of these things.

00:25:20:10 - 00:25:25:09

Lea Marin

But we also know that there are many people who find connection and community there.

00:25:25:09 - 00:25:25:20

Leslie Schachter

Right.

00:25:26:00 - 00:25:48:07

Fernando Carnavali

But if I may, I mean, this is a perfect example. Would you mention alcohol? So this is just a recent report also from the Surgeon General. Right to know quantity is kids. Okay. So this is how information is evolving. Correct. And and so like that was not the same message ten years

ago or five years ago. So where are we going to be with media and effect and loneliness.

00:25:48:09 - 00:26:17:17

Fernando Carnavali

God only knows. But again, sort of like I, I do believe that, we can do better and perhaps developing tools perhaps I did made myself clear not just on recommending senior. I'm edit I sometimes have recommend. Okay where's your near why and can you go to the Y and swim you know right. And again I feel that when they are, in this state of loneliness, it's just not that easy to, come with plans for yourself.

00:26:17:17 - 00:26:37:00

Fernando Carnavali

So you need to sort, so help them find their way out. And it's possible. I mean, like, there are, like, plenty of resources in your city, which is lucky that way, that's for sure. And I think that, you know, that's what I do with my patients. They appreciate. Do they go? Do they not go? That's a different story.

00:26:37:02 - 00:26:46:11

Fernando Carnavali

But at least we doing it. But it's not uniform. And I agree with you. It should be more uniform with everybody. Would be an interesting little study to see that.

00:26:46:13 - 00:26:57:21

Lea Marin

But it's hard, right? We live in the city with so many people. You and I just, you know, we're to found out we live in the same building, you know, and it's like, you know, so we're surrounded by these people, but we at the same time are not.

00:26:57:23 - 00:27:00:03

Leslie Schachter

Yeah. Right. And together but so separate.

00:27:00:03 - 00:27:15:11

Lea Marin

Exactly. You know, and I think that that sort of going back to the question of what can we help our patients do? What can we advise people to do? I struggle with that. Right. You know, I mean, I can I have sort of my list of organizations that I refer them to where we look at what their neighborhood or we talk about what their interests are.

00:27:15:11 - 00:27:25:23

Lea Marin

You don't want to take an art class. You're the 92nd Street Y has some great stuff, right? But at the end of the day, it's there's a ton of resources and also not enough. Not at all. Yeah.

00:27:26:01 - 00:27:51:04

Leslie Schachter

Yeah. I mean, I tell my patients, I often I would say the majority of my patients are over 50 and you find out it's really easy for me to weed out my lonely patients because they're usually don't have a strong social network or live alone or widowed or their family live somewhere else. And, I, I mask my loneliness treatment as surgical recovery program, which is really lovely because I don't have to say, hey, I know you're lonely.

00:27:51:06 - 00:28:06:05

Leslie Schachter

I say, listen, I need you to join a gym or get a trainer. I need you to go to the grocery store. I need you to walk back and forth to the grocery store or Barnes and Noble every day. For for the patients I know are very lonely. I make them see me post-operative every week for six weeks.

00:28:06:07 - 00:28:20:12

Leslie Schachter

They have to come to my office and see me in person to check their incision. I'm not billing for this. This is all in the global, but I mask. I mask my loneliness treatment and post-op recovery. Because I know, like, if they don't get out and move and do things, it's not going to it's not going to work, is it?

00:28:20:12 - 00:28:37:22

Lea Marin

May take that sort of that initial, you know, behavioral activation is sort of what we would call it in psychiatry, you know, getting them out of the house, getting them to do things that it's sort of like, you know, a body in motion stays in motion. Right? So if you sort of start small and it's like, okay, well, I want you to start going to the grocery store instead of FreshDirect, going to, you know, start and then it and then it grows.

00:28:37:22 - 00:28:40:23

Lea Marin

And, oh, I met someone there. And now we're going to grab we're gonna grab dinner.

00:28:41:05 - 00:28:59:01

Leslie Schachter

And not even go like go to don't go to the grocery store twice a week. Go every single day for what you need that day. Yeah. You know, it's it's make those trips I want to like, just back up a little bit because as sad as this sounds like loneliness in older people. Very sad. Right? Their world, like, is changing.

00:28:59:03 - 00:29:24:02

Leslie Schachter

But let's talk about this is mostly for like the parents out there or if kids are listening, let's talk about loneliness that happens in children and teens. Right? So let's just say because a lot of us have experienced this either ourselves or with friends or people, there's outcasts in school, right? Whether it's in kindergarten or fifth grade or whatever, for some reason, for whatever it mean, maybe their clothes weren't nice or they had the wrong hairdo.

00:29:24:08 - 00:29:46:13

Leslie Schachter

Kids can get outcast it and it sticks, and then they become lonely, and then they can even get bullied and it can spiral from there. How do parents recognize loneliness? And I'm looking at like a geriatrics. I'm fully aware. But like what? What are some of the things that parents could look for, be aware of and help make sure that that doesn't develop in their and their children?

00:29:46:15 - 00:29:54:01

Fernando Carnavali

I would wonder, I would ask you, is that a more objective? Would that would be, not a subject that it's not so that the child will head?

00:29:54:03 - 00:29:59:08

Lea Marin

I mean, it's hard, right? Like, I think that some kids are going to open up to their parents.

00:29:59:11 - 00:30:03:15

Fernando Carnavali

That they recognize or even recognize that that's what's going on.

00:30:03:15 - 00:30:22:08

Lea Marin

Right? But I think this is the same thing, is how do we detect anxiety and depression in kids as well, who may not necessarily. So a lot of the time in kids, especially younger kids, they will have, instead of saying, I feel anxious, it'll be my tummy hurts. Yeah, I have a headache. Right. And so, you know, I think a lot of the time it's sort of these physical symptoms there, you know.

00:30:22:12 - 00:30:39:07

Lea Marin

And so instead of having recess I need to go to the nurse. Right. And trying to like okay, but why is that happening. Are they trying to avoid the recess. Because there's some bullying happening, you know, bullying happening. You know, and sort of being sensitive that with kids it may not always look exactly how we would think it would look in an older person.

00:30:39:07 - 00:30:58:17

Lea Marin

Right. They may not have the words to describe that they're feeling lonely in this. And, I mean,

not that all adults do as well, but, you know, I think it can be harder for children. And so it's really important for us to I mean, I'm, I have to two kids and, you know, sort of tell me three things about your day is kind of the way we like to, you know, go around the dinner table.

00:30:58:17 - 00:31:15:01

Lea Marin

Yeah. And, you know, if you're noticing that the three things about the day are, oh, you know, I spent this period in the library and, you know, that could be someone who likes to be alone. So just because a kid doesn't have a robust social group doesn't mean that they're lonely. But I think asking those follow up questions like, okay, like what?

00:31:15:03 - 00:31:17:02

Lea Marin

Why did you do that? Or how was it?

00:31:17:04 - 00:31:21:18

Leslie Schachter

Yeah, I guess as long as they're saying they didn't eat lunch on the toilet alone. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

00:31:21:20 - 00:31:22:09

Lea Marin

Like I mean.

00:31:22:10 - 00:31:23:05

Fernando Carnavali

Girls, I mean.

00:31:23:05 - 00:31:25:02

Leslie Schachter

Performance, I mean.

00:31:25:04 - 00:31:45:14

Fernando Carnavali

What we when we talk about like the of that is a little outside the, the person how they're performing in in their quote unquote duties, you know and that that's very daily nothing for children. But like, at least that's what I can tell from my children as well. Are you performing? You know, just like, how well are you doing?

00:31:45:16 - 00:31:58:20

Fernando Carnavali

And again, that times is not that I'm not a pediatrician, just to clarify, but just as a parent, just try to measure, the productivity. Not because I want perfect grades, but just to be sure that it's no

red flags.

00:31:58:20 - 00:32:14:16

Lea Marin

Yeah. And it's the same thing in terms of work performance as well. Right? We know that individuals who are lonely are more likely to have difficulty, you know, that are more likely have difficulty at work to feel less fulfilled at work, you know. And so I do think that we see it starting with their grades and then sort of all the way up.

00:32:14:18 - 00:32:17:22

Leslie Schachter

What are the long term physical manifestations of loneliness?

00:32:18:03 - 00:32:40:10

Lea Marin

Increased risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke, increased risk of diabetes, increased risk of developing hypertension. But it's not just the risk of developing. It's also an increased risk of difficulty with managing it. Right. So if you have other people in your life to help remind you to take your medications, to help you get to the doctor's appointment that you need to say, oh, you know, I'm about to refill my meds, do you want me to get them for it for you as well at the pharmacy?

00:32:40:11 - 00:32:47:14

Lea Marin

Right, right. You know, I so I think that these adherence so not only the development of the illness but as well as the adherence of medication can all be impacted.

00:32:47:14 - 00:32:55:16

Leslie Schachter

So if it's leading to physical illnesses like that, what like what kind of hormonal changes, neurotransmitter changes are actually happening.

00:32:55:18 - 00:33:18:20

Lea Marin

Oof. I mean, we know that there are neuroendocrine changes. You mentioned before that there's inflammation that happens, right? I don't know personally. You know, I mean, I don't know if we know exactly what the changes are that's happening. But we do see the correlations are very strong. Right. So we do see an increased incidence of the diagnosis and also an increased risk of mortality.

00:33:18:22 - 00:33:21:05

Leslie Schachter

So it's dangerous to be lonely.

00:33:21:07 - 00:33:27:12

Fernando Carnavali

That's what we said at the beginning, the first chapter in the Bible. So is there. It's not good to be alone.

00:33:27:14 - 00:33:34:17

Leslie Schachter

And I this is probably just like well known or where does it come from? But like one of the greatest predictors for a long term survival is having a strong social network.

00:33:34:19 - 00:33:35:00

Fernando Carnavali

Yeah.

00:33:35:00 - 00:33:36:17

Leslie Schachter

This is like so publicly.

00:33:36:19 - 00:33:58:21

Fernando Carnavali

I mean we need to highlight what you said before the this is very objective. Correct. And we're not saying that being alone is a bad thing, but we recognize that for a subgroup of people that can have a negative impact, and some people are well-adjusted just to being by themselves. So months at a time, I mean, if we're talking about other people that do not have that healthy adjustment to it.

00:33:59:00 - 00:34:14:10

Lea Marin

And I think the other part of it is you can be surrounded by people and still feel lonely, you know? So I think that it's loneliness does not necessarily mean being alone. Right. You can have tons of people in your life, but not feel that the quality of those relationships are supporting you.

00:34:14:11 - 00:34:27:13

Leslie Schachter

Oh, I'm. I feel lonely in my house several nights a week. I my my husband sitting at his desk doing work. My daughter is on her whatever. And I'm just like sitting watching TV and I'm like, How come we're not hanging out together? Yeah. Why am I here by myself?

00:34:27:14 - 00:34:28:03

Lea Marin

So I think I.

00:34:28:07 - 00:34:31:05

Leslie Schachter

Recover from it very quickly, but I feel that way. Good.

00:34:31:07 - 00:34:32:12

Fernando Carnavali

That's good to know.

00:34:32:14 - 00:34:47:23

Lea Marin

But that for that we talked about that before and how having those momentary feelings also forces you to then increase your social connectivity. Right? So it's actually a good thing sometimes to have that feeling. Maybe it results in you walking into your daughter's room, sitting down on the bed and forcing her to get off her phone. You know, like I think.

00:34:47:23 - 00:34:49:09

Leslie Schachter

Or do her homework for her. Yeah.

00:34:49:11 - 00:35:03:23

Lea Marin

Yeah, yeah. Ideally, but, you know, I think, I think that it's important that, you know, it's not about the volume of social context. It's about the quality of social care. Right. And what I need will be different from what you need.

00:35:04:01 - 00:35:09:07

Leslie Schachter

But what did you want to add to that? I saw you jumping in a little bit before, or you just emphatically agreeing.

00:35:09:07 - 00:35:38:21

Shawn Rhoads

I wasn't actually agreeing, but I was also thinking back to an earlier point about, like, you know, you know, making choices to go out and meet people, right? Like, we often try to make choices to optimize outcomes. Right. And when social outcomes are really important to us, then a healthy behavior would then be to go out and, you know, meet people or exactly go to your daughter's room or, you know, to engage, call a friend.

00:35:38:23 - 00:36:01:16

Shawn Rhoads

Right. But when, we aren't doing that. Right, if there's something impeding that or coming in the way of that, whether it's, you know, we're being really busy at work or, you know, someone isn't available to hang out, then. Then that could be, you know, you're choosing to behave this way,

but then, you're not able to, but it's not due to you.

00:36:01:16 - 00:36:04:00

Shawn Rhoads

It just due to some external factors. Well, I.

00:36:04:00 - 00:36:21:09

Leslie Schachter

Can imagine there's also probably some, like, I could walk up to anyone and talk about anything at any time. I have no fear of rejection, but I can. I know, I know what it's like to have that because I felt that way in middle school and high school. I was I was that person that wasn't included. So I know what it's like to have fear of rejection.

00:36:21:11 - 00:36:40:00

Leslie Schachter

So I can imagine there's a little bit of of that associated with it. But, getting going out and choosing to let's take the gym, for example, going to the gym, maybe saying hello to someone or hi to someone, no strings attached. If that person doesn't want to talk to you or engage with you, you tried. They're not thinking twice about it, right?

00:36:40:00 - 00:36:43:16

Leslie Schachter

Is that like a hard concept for a lonely people who maybe aren't the most outgoing?

00:36:43:21 - 00:36:58:19

Lea Marin

I think it's person by person, you know? But I think that the other thing, though, on the other side of it, is to take a moment to be like, if you're walking your dog in the park and you're someone who maybe is not experiencing loneliness and someone comes to talk to you, maybe think maybe that's why they're doing it.

00:36:58:19 - 00:37:02:01

Lea Marin

You know, I'm sort of saying to to all of our listeners out there.

00:37:02:03 - 00:37:04:13

Leslie Schachter

This is a great public service announcement as a public service.

00:37:04:13 - 00:37:15:03

Lea Marin

Announcement. You know, if somebody comes up to talk to you, maybe that's because they're looking for social connection and maybe take the extra two seconds to talk to them. It may make

a difference in their day.

00:37:15:08 - 00:37:34:18

Leslie Schachter

It's not a long term commitment. It may be a 32nd conversation. Yeah, that's really okay. So it might be really hard for lonely people to engage, but it's people who aren't lonely. What are the things that there are things that we can do so engaging? What else can we do if we think that someone's lonely, like the lay person?

00:37:34:20 - 00:37:42:10

Lea Marin

You mean if if a lay person notices someone else is lonely? You know, I mean, I think just the common sense stuff, you know? Hey, how you doing?

00:37:42:10 - 00:37:48:06

Leslie Schachter

I've learned common sense is not so common. Just so you know. Yeah. So, you know, definitely true.

00:37:48:08 - 00:38:06:09

Lea Marin

You know, but I think asking them to do something right, going out of your way to, you know, hey, do you want to grab a coffee? Right. Like, if you're noticing in the same way, you know, and I think that this this is kindness, right? And, you know, I would have made a really big difference to you when you were getting left out in middle school and high school.

00:38:06:14 - 00:38:11:08

Lea Marin

Yeah. If someone says, hey, come sit with us. Yeah. You know, I mean, there's. Why not?

00:38:11:10 - 00:38:32:04

Leslie Schachter

Actually, I have a lovely story and I remember this. And it still like, right now, it warms my heart. I, I've been six, four since I was 12. And that's really out casting like that is really. It sounds great now, but growing up, being so much taller and bigger than everyone else was really, really uncomfortable. I was excluded from a lot.

00:38:32:05 - 00:38:49:08

Leslie Schachter

When I was in sixth or seventh grade, a new kid came to the school. I don't remember from what country, but he came to the school and he looked different. He wore different clothes and I felt so bad for him because he would go to sit with other people at the lunch table and people would move. And he was just he was excluded right from the start.

00:38:49:10 - 00:39:08:09

Leslie Schachter

And so I became friends with him. I sat with him and we kind of got to know each other, and this kind of went on for a couple months. And his name was Igor. And I got and I won an award at my school, like student of the month or something. Fast forward, I was at a rest stop on 95.

00:39:08:11 - 00:39:27:18

Leslie Schachter

In my 20s, and I ran into him. He recognized me. He came up to me, he gave me a hug and a kiss, and he said, you completely changed the trajectory of my life. He said, I thought I was so miserable moving to the United States. And you were the one person who gave attention to me. And then, you know, once you kind of moved on other it just moved to other people.

00:39:27:18 - 00:39:34:16

Leslie Schachter

And I will never forget how you made me feel. And it was not hard for me. It was very those simple things can make a really big difference.

00:39:34:18 - 00:39:57:08

Shawn Rhoads

And it works both ways too. So I think, so there's actually something that my lab is really interested in is like, so one of the biggest predictors of happiness around the world is pro-social behavior, right? It makes us happy. It makes other people happy. In general, if, you if you observe an act of kindness, right.

00:39:57:08 - 00:40:21:05

Shawn Rhoads

It makes the observers happy, too. And I think this is like, also something we could kind of recommend, right? If you if you're feeling lonely, you know, maybe the easy thing to do is go volunteer. Yeah. Right. You know, find a charity that you or a cause that you really support. You know, find a friend, be like, hey, I'm thinking about going to the food pantry.

00:40:21:07 - 00:40:22:17

Shawn Rhoads

Let's go together, right.

00:40:22:17 - 00:40:24:23

Leslie Schachter

And and offer to walk a neighbor's dog.

00:40:24:23 - 00:40:34:06

Shawn Rhoads

Right. And if, if they're. Exactly. And, I mean, I feel like that is like a huge thing. It boosts social connection. Social connection also makes us happy, right?

00:40:34:08 - 00:40:35:11

Leslie Schachter

People like being useful.

00:40:35:11 - 00:40:37:00

Lea Marin

Yeah.

00:40:37:02 - 00:40:44:20

Shawn Rhoads

And so maybe this is also, you know, not only, you know, I think everyone, you know, just needs to be a little bit more kind and then.

00:40:44:22 - 00:40:59:13

Fernando Carnavali

And again, sort of like the importance of all we said before, it needs to be some structure. I mean, like at the end, the four of us. So we're very kind and we're trying to do that every day, most likely. But should we structure perhaps that school should have had a program?

00:40:59:13 - 00:41:00:10

Leslie Schachter

Yeah.

00:41:00:12 - 00:41:29:02

Fernando Carnavali

Okay. Or perhaps the local pantries need to put information out there. Again at the individual level. There's so many variables out there. But what we know and we know from the report, the report points out that, you know, society has some role and the structure societies and structures, schools, structure, pantries will go perhaps even a stronger way. Helping out, helping these people.

00:41:29:04 - 00:41:53:21

Fernando Carnavali

I just wanted to comment, going back to what you said about the gym and social isolation and that one of the problems about the gym is, well, what how much you pay for the gym. So one of the things that we know about who is at high risk or some social isolation and disconnection, is that the people that have in some financial struggles.

00:41:53:23 - 00:42:16:19

Fernando Carnavali

Right? So and that sort of that perhaps was exacerbated by, you know, Covid and is something that we cannot ignore. So I again, when we are recommending these things in the office, we have to be also mindful. And again, we do have and actually we are very good at capturing social determinants of health. So we are asking these questions.

00:42:16:21 - 00:42:26:18

Fernando Carnavali

There are tough questions. But you know for some people struggling, it really makes matters worse. And they are isolated because of that.

00:42:26:18 - 00:42:46:05

Lea Marin

Yeah, absolutely. I think that's so true. And, you know, sort of how addressing those social determinants of health, of which I think isolation is one of this to determine, but how in addressing those social determinants of health, can you also be addressing isolation. Right. So even if somebody has food insecurity and you set them up to get meals on wheels, is that then a social interaction that they have?

00:42:46:05 - 00:42:48:19

Lea Marin

You know. And so I think that these things are so interrelated.

00:42:48:20 - 00:43:01:07

Fernando Carnavali

Yeah, I happens in New York when it happens. It's not that I'm talking about something that I have not seen. You said people, you know don't make it till the end of the month. So that's the people that will really now go out.

00:43:01:09 - 00:43:23:15

Leslie Schachter

It's almost it sounds like an incredible program that you could have. There's probably people out there that need something or need help with something and maybe don't have money to pay for it. And then there's people out there that want interaction and would be, you know, like like watching children or dogs or picking up groceries. Those things are might be helpful for someone and give someone else something to do.

00:43:23:16 - 00:43:44:21

Fernando Carnavali

Yeah, yeah. So I lot of this structure the structure the structure seems individuals is sort of like the, if you wish. And I'm like, I don't know if the right word, but obligation from, you know, from the city, the state, whatever you want, you know, to put the obligation on. But should come from a structure, entity.

00:43:44:23 - 00:43:58:16

Leslie Schachter

Like if the government were to get involved in some sort of funded loneliness program. Right. How is that financially helping on the back end? Like, what money is it ultimately saving?

00:43:58:21 - 00:44:23:13

Fernando Carnavali

What if we, you know, if we follow? Well, you mentioned before, I mean the return on the investment would be there. The statistics are showing impacting so many at so many levels in so many illnesses, which so, you know, the percentages are so high that one can claim that the return on investment is there. Nevertheless, just like, you know, some of the numbers and sharpened up pencil.

00:44:23:17 - 00:44:44:02

Leslie Schachter

Right, right. So now in the world of like AI and technology, you can actually pay for AI companionship. You can put on the Oculus and have conversations with people. So what are your thoughts on like AI companionship or even paying for companionship? Like so it's something outside of the normal like authenticity type of relationship.

00:44:44:06 - 00:44:59:13

Lea Marin

I mean, I think this is similar to this social media conversation, right? You know, I mean, I think that you don't even have to pay for it. You can go to ChatGPT and be like, hey, how are you? What's your, you know, and, and have a conversation and have and I mean and then sometimes it gets I think, you know, it sort of does it cross a line right.

00:44:59:13 - 00:45:12:17

Lea Marin

When this, when it gets in the way of you then maybe having other interactions in your life, you know, when you, when you, you know, get stuck in that world, that virtual world that maybe can become problematic. But yeah, I mean, I think whatever works, right.

00:45:12:19 - 00:45:18:22

Leslie Schachter

Would you consider playing video games like, you know, the video games that people play, they play with other people on the line. Would that be considered?

00:45:18:22 - 00:45:29:00

Lea Marin

Oh, apps, companionship. It not only is a companionship that's community, right? I mean, I think that so many of these games especially and I have to tell you, I have never played any of these, so I may sound very.

00:45:29:00 - 00:45:35:00

Leslie Schachter

I mean, I've listened to my son for years, like I'm sitting there thing like, can't he just get out and hang out with his friend? He's like, mom, I'm talking to my friends.

00:45:35:02 - 00:45:53:09

Lea Marin

And there's a whole, a whole world that you can have there and support systems. And so I don't think that it's like it has to be an in, like it's only equality if it's an in-person interaction at all. I think it's about wherever you feel your needs are being met and how they're being met. If that's AI generated, why not?

00:45:53:11 - 00:45:59:06

Leslie Schachter

Is there any research in that in like different ways of companionship and interactions.

00:45:59:08 - 00:46:19:00

Shawn Rhoads

I would say. So there are a lot of studies that where, you know, these are just not they're not games, but they're just like boring cognitive tasks that we have people do, where they are told they're interacting with another person, and then they're also told they're interacting with there's a computer, which is kind of similar to what you're talking about.

00:46:19:00 - 00:46:31:10

Shawn Rhoads

And people the interactions that we see with people are almost always way different than how they interact with computers. Their brain responses are also different.

00:46:31:12 - 00:46:35:15

Leslie Schachter

We'd say more like would. Yeah, yeah, kind of give a little more on that.

00:46:35:17 - 00:46:55:15

Shawn Rhoads

Yeah. It's like, you know, if I'm interacting with another person, you know, I might, you know, want to engage and think more and think more about, like, you know, what are what is this person thinking right now? Like, I'm kind of forming a mental model of, this person that I'm playing, I'm doing this cognitive task with.

00:46:55:17 - 00:47:22:03

Shawn Rhoads

But when you're just playing with the computer, you know that this computer doesn't have, any

sort of agency or kind of like mind of its own. And so that could be getting in the way of that social interaction. Right. And so we do see that, you know, brain regions that are responsible for representing other people's emotions, their beliefs, those are more engaged when people are told they're talking to or playing with another person.

00:47:22:05 - 00:47:29:01

Shawn Rhoads

Great. To a huge like, much greater extent than when they're told they're being they're playing with the computer. Yeah.

00:47:29:03 - 00:47:51:02

Fernando Carnavali

Independently of the impact that you're now moving around. Correct. I mean, like, so if you go to play in the park, you know, ten minutes of a soccer game, correct. The minute you take the elevator, you walk to the park, just the perhaps you put 5000 steps, you say hi to the guy in the corner. There you now you pop, you sip coffee on the way back.

00:47:51:02 - 00:48:15:05

Fernando Carnavali

So all all that is just lost. Correct. And and all of a sudden if we're going back to the fact that, we have an epidemic of obesity and you know, we're, you know, alimentation as a whole, I think we're going to end up with more illnesses that perhaps will make people lonely because they would be just socially isolated in the long run.

00:48:15:07 - 00:48:34:14

Fernando Carnavali

That's my concern. Correct? I mean, I feel I just and I have seen it, I don't want to say at home, but I've seen it at home, I guess, where, you know, even some of the activities that the children do there with the friends. Yeah. Yeah, everybody just like watching them doing their homework. I mean, it's they are so together, you.

00:48:34:14 - 00:48:35:13

Leslie Schachter

Know, this is hard for us.

00:48:35:15 - 00:48:48:15

Fernando Carnavali

They're not moving and they are just not moving. A single muscle can right them in the eye. And this is just, So, are they in good shape? God knows. I mean, like, you have a moving entire week out of the computer.

00:48:48:16 - 00:48:57:22

Leslie Schachter

It's really hard being like a parent in this of this generation. You're like, you can't help but judge. It's the way that you grow up and feel like it's less than. Even though it might not be.

00:48:57:22 - 00:49:01:01

Lea Marin

That's every generation, you know. Right. You know, back in the day.

00:49:01:01 - 00:49:08:11

Leslie Schachter

Yeah, yeah, yeah. What is something that someone would feel that it would be like the right time to actually seek expert consult.

00:49:08:12 - 00:49:26:23

Lea Marin

So, you know, we mentioned how loneliness can increase risks of anxiety, increase risk of having a diagnosis of depression. It can also increase thoughts of suicidality. So I think that if you are experienced certainly if it's suicidality, that would be a time that I would absolutely reach out. Right. So they're you can call 988, which is a crisis line that you can call any time.

00:49:26:23 - 00:49:45:07

Lea Marin

But that would also be, you know, obviously if it's acutely suicidal to go to the emergency room, but if you're experiencing depression or anxiety as a result of your loneliness, you should definitely seek the mental health professional. And I would say that here at Sinai, we've got a brand new behavioral health center. We you know, we've got outpatient services, we've got groups, we've got individual therapy.

00:49:45:07 - 00:50:06:09

Lea Marin

There's a partial hospitalization and intensive program. There's so many different options to sort of meet people where they're at in terms of how they want to engage in care. But so in terms of when would you do it? I think that when your loneliness is causing these depression and anxious symptoms, symptoms that are making it so that you're not functioning at the same level.

00:50:06:12 - 00:50:12:09

Leslie Schachter

Or even if it's crossing your mind, that should. I think if it's crossing your mind, should I go see someone? The answer is probably yes.

00:50:12:09 - 00:50:13:12

Lea Marin

Why not?

00:50:13:14 - 00:50:17:07

Leslie Schachter

Like the worst they say is actually, I think you're doing okay. You don't need any.

00:50:17:11 - 00:50:26:10

Lea Marin

Are the worst they say is, hey, you know, this doesn't sound like depression, but it does sound like you're really lonely. Yeah, right. Let's talk about that.

00:50:26:12 - 00:50:31:21

Leslie Schachter

But what does that mean for maybe, like patients with Medicaid or without insurance, can they still get help.

00:50:31:21 - 00:50:49:14

Lea Marin

When we're not at the behavioral health center, we take Medicaid, we take Medicare. You can absolutely get help. You know, I think it is something that Mount Sinai views is really important that we have access to care that is not dependent on your ability to pay for.

00:50:49:15 - 00:50:53:05

Leslie Schachter

Okay. And you found a statistic that you wanted to share with us. I want to find that. And you.

00:50:53:05 - 00:50:58:17

Lea Marin

Were just only when you were asking about the, you know, would it make sense investment wise to.

00:50:58:17 - 00:51:02:01

Leslie Schachter

You know, because I know how the country government works. Yeah. Anything.

00:51:02:03 - 00:51:17:13

Lea Marin

And so, you know, it's thought that the economic cost of loneliness is \$6.7 billion. Wow. Right. And most of this is through Medicare spending and nursing home. Right. So I think that in terms of would there be a return on investment. Yeah, absolutely.

00:51:17:15 - 00:51:42:10

Leslie Schachter

So we learned a lot today about loneliness. We learned that you can be a very healthy individual with no medical or psychiatric disorders. And you can be lonely. Lonely. Loneliness is not

something that like you experience for just like a couple of hours once. That's I like we call that solitude for people who enjoy it. But loneliness can be really bad for your mental health, for your physical health.

00:51:42:11 - 00:52:02:06

Leslie Schachter

It can. It can lead to death, early death in some people. It can make you ill in the hospital can lead to really, really bad things. Right. But we also came up with some really easy fixes for it. Should someone be able to take those fixes like going for a walk, going to the grocery store, going to a gym, asking to help walk a dog, or just have a conversation with someone?

00:52:02:08 - 00:52:08:21

Leslie Schachter

What would you say is like the one big message that you got each want to get out about loneliness that you could leave our listeners with?

00:52:08:23 - 00:52:27:03

Lea Marin

I think my biggest message would be if loneliness is resulting in you having symptoms of depression and anxiety, you should get help. There are people. There are clinicians who are available and interested in helping you. It can't hurt to reach out. Okay, great.

00:52:27:05 - 00:52:41:05

Fernando Carnavali

Loneliness is more than about feeling and it should be part of the regular visit to your doctor. I mean, we we learning, you know how to do it better, but we have enough access at Sinai for you to come and just talk about it.

00:52:41:07 - 00:52:43:16

Leslie Schachter

Right. Okay.

00:52:43:18 - 00:53:03:12

Shawn Rhoads

I think there are huge costs alone. Yes, but I think we also want to think about the huge benefits of social connection in general. Right? Whether it's, you know, being able to help someone who needs their medication, whether it's, you know, enjoying the things that you love to do.

00:53:03:14 - 00:53:24:07

Leslie Schachter

I consider myself an optimist, a happy person. I, I'm like the opposite of a lonely person. However, I feel like lots of people are like this, especially like busy working people. I could make plans 2 or 3 nights a week, but when it comes time for the plan, I don't want to do them. I just

want to go home and be alone.

00:53:24:07 - 00:53:40:18

Leslie Schachter

And I don't want to talk. But I remind myself in that moment that it's fun to have fun. It's fun to have social connections so I can see how people who like you cancel once and you don't make a plan and you don't reschedule. And how that can actually turn into loneliness because I've actually purposely not made plans.

00:53:40:18 - 00:53:50:06

Leslie Schachter

And then I find myself being like, how come I wasn't included in something? So that kind of goes back to what you were saying before is like, social connection is good, but you have to do it.

00:53:50:10 - 00:53:51:18

Shawn Rhoads

Exactly. Yeah.

00:53:51:20 - 00:53:52:22

Lea Marin

It takes work.

00:53:53:00 - 00:53:55:07

Leslie Schachter

It's it's hard work to not be lonely.

00:53:55:07 - 00:54:06:01

Lea Marin

It's hard work. But, you know, I think it's it's hard work to do physical activity to stay healthy. This is the same thing, right? It's hard work sometimes to be socially connected to help you stay healthy.

00:54:06:03 - 00:54:18:15

Leslie Schachter

So social engagement and preventing loneliness is akin to going to the gym and doing squats. It's what if you want to get strong? You go to the gym and do squats. If you don't want to be lonely and you want friends, you have to show.

00:54:18:16 - 00:54:20:06

Lea Marin

Size those social muscles.

00:54:20:08 - 00:54:21:15

Leslie Schachter
Exercise their social.

00:54:21:15 - 00:54:47:04

Fernando Carnavali

Muscles. I think in this an obligation, I think not just on the individual level, but, you know, as a society as a whole to create this structures, to prevent this. If we're talking about an epidemic by now, we know that we don't respond properly to epidemics of pandemics. We pay high price. So if we call it an epidemic, we need to have the the responsibility to, you know, at each level, respond the right way.

00:54:47:07 - 00:54:47:16

Fernando Carnavali

Right?

00:54:47:16 - 00:54:48:09

Leslie Schachter

Right.

00:54:48:11 - 00:55:15:17

Lea Marin

And, you know, and I think it's important to take time to nurture your relationships, right. To take time to nurture your friendships, your relationships, your family relationships. Right. Like I was saying, it takes work, right? But the benefits are worth it. And then also another thing is that maybe you don't have to increase the amount of social connection, but maybe put your phone away when you are having these social interactions increase the quality of the interactions that you are having, right?

00:55:15:19 - 00:55:25:23

Leslie Schachter

Yeah. We have to remind ourselves, like when I'm out at dinner with my family and I'm thankful, like we have good conversation. I get sad when I look at other tables and everyone's just sitting on their phone and no one's communicating.

00:55:25:23 - 00:55:27:00

Fernando Carnavali

It's sad. It's very sad.

00:55:27:05 - 00:55:46:08

Leslie Schachter

Yeah, yeah. So hopefully we can get away from that. Well, I want to thank you guys for being here today. I think the biggest message that I hope our viewers and listeners take away from this is feeling lonely, being nervous, that are you lonely or maybe there's something else going

on is absolutely a reason to call and schedule an appointment with your doctor.

00:55:46:12 - 00:56:02:01

Leslie Schachter

If you have a primary care doctor, that can easily be your first phone call. If you don't have a primary care provider or you're not sure who to call, we have some great information here. We'll put it back up on the screen on how to get a behavioral health consult. And it's okay to call and say, I'm lonely and I'm looking for help.

00:56:02:03 - 00:56:03:10

Leslie Schachter

So thank you again.

00:56:03:12 - 00:56:04:07

Fernando Carnavali

Thank you.

00:56:04:09 - 00:56:04:20

Lea Marin

Thank you.