LONELINESS

What Is Loneliness? Loneliness is the feeling that you lack meaningful relationships or a solid support system. It is different from being alone, which may be welcomed by many of us, depending upon the context. Beyond feeling temporarily isolated or excluded, loneliness is an emotional state of feeling apart from others.

What Are the Effects of Loneliness?

Loneliness, living alone, and poor social connections are as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Loneliness is worse for you than obesity.

Lonely people are more likely to suffer from dementia, heart disease and depression.

Loneliness may increase your risk of death by 29%.

Five Pathways to Tackle Loneliness

1 | ENGAGE CEOS AND LEADERS
Have candid conversations with the CEO and senior leaders who can open the door for an organization-wide de-stigmatizing conversation.

2 | CULTIVATE CONVERSATIONAL CONNECTION
Embed opportunities for more authentic conversation into the organization's norms and daily practices. This will foster strong, connected relationships among staff. Aim for a culture that models and encourages curiosity, empathy and courage in employees' daily interactions.

3 | INSTITUTE PRACTICES OF CONNECTION
Consider programs, systems and practices that support people building meaningful relationships at work, including buddy programs and mentoring opportunities. Encourage more face-to-face interactions whenever possible and train managers on developing these practices among their teams.

4 | FIND PROJECTS WITH MEANING
Getting involved in projects that have greater purpose beyond ourselves has been shown to alleviate loneliness. What is your organization's "Why?" that employees can rally around? Help employees to see themselves as part of the organization's vision.

» **Example:** Allow staff to direct the philanthropic focus or activity of the organization

» **Example:** Permit 10% of work time that people can dedicate to an initiative not directly within their work responsibility.

5 | SUPPORT VOLUNTEERING AND CARING FOR OTHERS
Helping others focuses us outwardly and stimulates our own gratitude and positive feelings. Implement policies and mechanisms that support caregiving.

» **Example:** Allow employees one paid day a year to volunteer in the community with a local nonprofit, perhaps one that is aligned to organizational and staff vision and values.