

HEALING POWER OF HUMAN CONNECTIONS

During the Coronavirus Pandemic much has been written concerning isolation, loneliness, and resilience. Vivek H. Murthy describes strategies to help us not only to weather the Coronavirus Pandemic but also to heal our social world well into the future.

Research has shown that people with **strong social relationships are 50 percent less likely to die prematurely than people with weak social relationships**. The impact of lacking social relationships on reducing life span is **equal to** the risk of **smoking fifteen cigarettes a day**, and is **greater than** the risk associated with obesity, excess alcohol consumption, and lack of exercise. Weak social connections can be a significant danger to our health. (1)

Murthy's four key strategies to help us concerning isolation and loneliness include:

1. **Spend time each day with those you love.** This is not limited to the people in your immediate household. **Reach out also to the other members** of your lifeline via telephone, or videoconference. Devote at least **fifteen minutes each day** to connect with those you most care about.
2. **Focus on each other.** Try to eliminate distractions when interacting with others. Forget about multitasking and give the other person the **gift of your full attention**, making eye contact, if possible and **genuinely listening**.
3. **Embrace solitude.** The first step toward building stronger connections with others is to **build a stronger connection with oneself**. Solitude helps us do that by allowing us to check in with our own feelings and thoughts, explore our creativity, and connect with nature. **Meditation, prayer, art, music, and time spent outdoors** can all be sources of solitary comfort and joy.
4. **Help and be helped.** Service is a form of human connection that reminds us of our value and purpose in life. **Giving and receiving both, strengthens our social bonds** --- checking on a neighbor, seeking advice, even just offering a smile to a stranger six feet away, all can make us stronger. (2)

1. Vivek H. Murthy, *Together* (New York: Harper Wave, 2020), p. 13
2. Vivek H. Murthy, *Together* (New York: Harper Wave, 2020), XVI.

Isolation and loneliness is a most important health issue and more coverage will follow. **Thank you for taking care of yourself and others!**

Submitted by: Dr. Dale Johnson