




THE PROBLEM

All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

THE PROBLEM

- Let's first review a bit of evidence about widespread loneliness.
- I'm not going to drown you in research statistics.
- I'll share some basic data so that you have a context for the problem before we move onto the reasons it's a problem and what to do about it.



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

THE PROBLEM

- Why does loneliness matter?
 - We are social creatures who evolved to be with others
 - Loneliness over time can lead to depression
 - Lack of support is a key factor in people struggling with depression



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

THE PROBLEM

- Highest teen loneliness in three decades (Twenge, 2017)
- 31% more 8th and 10th graders felt lonely in 2015 than in 2011
- 22% more 12th graders felt lonely in 2015 than in 2011
- Teens are lonelier now than any time since the survey began in 1991



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

THE PROBLEM

- Increased screen time, increased loneliness (Twenge, 2017)
- Rise of smartphones and loneliness in the past decade
- How to cut the risk of loneliness in half
- Those visiting social networking sites daily or nearly every day are 11% more likely to be lonely



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

THE PROBLEM

- Now that you have a little more context around the problem, let's explore the reasons we are seeing this problem in our kids.



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B




REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM

All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM


- We will review the following 5 reasons for increased loneliness:
 - Timing of increased loneliness and introduction of smartphones
 - Boys compared to girls
 - Our evolution
 - Online versus in-person interactions
 - Isolation



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM

- The timing cannot be ignored
 - Such large changes in a short period are unusual, suggesting a specific cause.
 - "Given the timing, smartphones are likely the culprit, increasing loneliness both directly and indirectly by replacing in-person social interaction." -Jean Twenge



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM

- Feeling left out and alone - boys compared to girls (Twenge, 2017)
- 48% more girls felt left out in 2015 than in 2010
- 27% more boys felt left out in 2015 than in 2010
- Girls use social media more, giving them more opportunity to feel left out and lonely when they see people getting together without them.



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM

- Feeling left out and alone - boys compared to girls (Twenge, 2017)
- Seeing friends out when they were not invited
- Cyberbullying with girls compared to boys
- Girls are twice as likely to experience cyberbullying



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM

- Evolution of our species (Twenge, 2017)
- We evolved to crave face-to-face interaction
- Astutely attuned to social acceptance and rejection
- Brief, randomly assigned experience of being socially rejected led to increasing aggression, feelings of hopelessness, and cause participants to eat more cookies (Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, 2002).



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM

- Evolution of our species (Twenge, 2017)
- Region of the brain involved in physical pain is activated when people are left out.
- Social media and texting are fertile ground for these negative emotions.



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM

- Study involving college students (Sherman, Minas & Greenfield, 2013)
- Interacted in two ways, online or in person
- Those who interacted in person felt emotionally closer to one other
- 99.9% of our brain evolution occurred when the only way to interact with someone was in person



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM


- Low Value Interactions are not equivalent to High Value Socializing (Newport, 2019)
- Seemingly innocuous interactions such as "clicking like" or commenting on a person's post teaches your mind that connection is a viable substitute for conversation when it is not.
- Texting not sufficiently rich to fulfill our craving for real conversation



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM

- More isolation (more on this in the Social Skills Deficits Module)
- Data shows that teens are much less likely to hang out with friends in person, which leads to more feelings of loneliness.
- Screen time can lead a person to believe they are more connected, but according to the needs of their brain, they are not.
- The brain is not designed to replace in-person interactions with online interactions.



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

REASONS IT'S A PROBLEM

- So a quick recap, we reviewed 5 reasons for increased loneliness:
 - Timing of loneliness and smartphones
 - Boys compared to girls
 - Our evolution
 - Online versus in-person interactions
 - Isolation



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- This section covers major concepts for reducing loneliness
- It is not intended to be prescriptive
- It is intended to provide guidance toward your own personal strategies



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- We will review the following 5 ways to reduce loneliness:
 - Explore the source
 - High-quality leisure activities
 - Problem solving
 - Limiting screen time and social media
 - Stop clicking, start consolidating, and plan phone-free socializing



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- Find out what is spurring the loneliness
 - Are they feeling left out?
 - Are they bored?
 - Examine how exactly your child is spending their time.



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- Find out what is spurring the loneliness
 - Are they involved in extracurricular activities?
 - Do they have a friend or friends they can invite over?
 - Do they take part in high-quality leisure activities?



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- High-Quality Leisure Activities (Newport, 2019)
 - Aristotle identified high-quality leisure activity as crucial for human happiness
 - Consider renovating what you and your child do in your free time
 - Fill free time with focused intention and digital habits will seem frivolous



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- Problem-solve - if your kid IS NOT involved in activities
 - Sit with your child and brainstorm possible high-quality leisure activities to pursue.
 - Determine feasible activities based on time and resources.
 - Establish a new routine to engage them with these new high-quality leisure activity pursuits.



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- Problem-solve - if your child IS involved in activities and feeling lonely due to social rejection
- Encourage your child to make other friends
- Help them understand the importance of a real-life social network
- More friendships create more options for social events and interactions



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- Decrease smartphone and social media usage
- Lower the chance of your child seeing friends hanging out without them.
- Less smartphone time naturally leads to less social media time.
- Set a goal for social media screen time and stick to it.



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- "Don't Click Like" - *Cal Newport*
 - Do not click like or post comments on another's posts.
 - Remember that low-value interaction does not equal high-value socializing. The more you engage in this low-value interaction the more it will push out high-value socializing.
 - Save your comments for a phone call or an in-person interaction



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- Consolidate Texting (Newport, 2019)
 - Schedule specific times for texting
 - Keep phone on Do Not Disturb mode
 - Adjust settings for emergencies



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- Phone-free hangouts
 - Encourage your child to invite friends over.
 - Talk it over with other parents so they know how to reach their child.
 - Put the phones in the basket and watch as empathy and deeper social connection occurs between kids.
- Give the gift of decreased distraction



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- Just a quick recap, we reviewed these 5 ways to reduce loneliness:
 - Explore the source
 - High-quality leisure activities
 - Problem solving
 - Limiting screen time and social media
- Stop clicking, start consolidating, and plan phone-free socializing



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B

REFERENCES

- Newport, C. (2019). *Digital minimalism: Choosing a focused life in a noisy world*. New York: Penguin Random House.
- Twenge, J.M., Catanese, K.R., & Baumeister, R.F., (2002). Social exclusion causes self-defeating behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83, 606-615.
- Twenge, J. (2017). iGen: Why today's super-connected kids are growing up less rebellious, more tolerant, less happy- and completely unprepared for adulthood* and what that means for the rest of us (1st ed., p. 96). New York: Atria.
- Sherman, L.E., Minas, M. & Greenfield, P.M. (2013). The effects of text, audio, video, and in-person communication on bonding between friends. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 7, article 3 <https://doi.org/10.5817/CP2013-2-3>



All rights reserved © 2020 Learning with Dr. B
