

Connection, Loneliness, and Finding Meaning

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What is Loneliness?

- Discrepancy between the social connections you need and the connections you have
- Being alone, or being with others
- Feels like: Isolation, a heavy weight, invisible, a deep dark hole
- Looks like: Anger, irritability, withdrawal



Consequences of Loneliness

Substance Misuse

Violence

Premature Death

Coronary Heart Disease

High blood pressure

Stroke

Dementia

Depression

Anxiety

Poor sleep


Impulsive behavior



Prevalence

22% of adults (55 million people) in the US feel lonely or socially isolated “often” or “always”.





"Quite Simply, human relationship is as essential to our wellbeing as food and water. Just as hunger and thirst are our body's way of telling us we need to eat and drink, loneliness is the natural signal that reminds us when we need to connect with other people"

- Dr. Vivek Murthy





The Biological Argument for Connection

Social Connection is necessary for the survival
of the species

Social knowledge/Gossip

Hard wired for connection

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- Oxytocin = Promotes bonding within social groups (increases fear of outsiders)
 - Endorphins = Natural opioid released when we touch others
 - Dopamine = Surges when we form connections
 - Sympathetic Nervous System Response = Kicks in at signs of isolation



Takotsubo Syndrome

A large crowd of people is gathered at night, releasing numerous glowing paper lanterns into the dark sky. The lanterns are illuminated from within, creating a warm, golden light that contrasts with the deep blue and black of the night. Many people in the foreground are holding up their smartphones to capture photos or videos of the event. The scene is festive and celebratory, with the lanterns floating upwards in various directions, some appearing as small specks of light and others as larger, more detailed shapes. The overall atmosphere is one of hope and joy.

The Good News

Three Dimensions of Connection

- ❖ Intimate Connection Close confidant or intimate partner.
- ❖ Social Connection Quality friendships, social companionship, professionals.
- ❖ Collective Connection Network or community that share you sense of purpose and interests.



Intimate and Social Connection

Drivers of Loneliness

Not being your authentic self
Connection vs validation

Feeling unworthy

Perfectionism & Pleasing

Shame

Shame is...

“intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed, and therefore unworthy of love and connection” – Brené Brown

Shame needs secrecy, silence and judgement to grow.

Shame prevents connection


Empathy is

- Recognizing the feelings and experiences of others and saying 'you are not alone, I'm here with you'
- The antidote to shame
- Builds real, authentic connection

Empathy is not

- Having the perfect or 'right' response
- Judgmental or comparative. "At least...." or "Mine is worse..."
- Fixing other people, or taking their pain away.

Collective Connection & Finding Meaning



Meaning is “the nourishing experience of feeling like we’re connected to something larger than ourselves. It helps us thrive when things are going well, and it helps us cope when things go wrong in our lives.”



Find meaning by connecting with something larger than yourself

- Job
- Volunteering
- Spiritual Practice/Religion
- Hobby
- Future Goals
- Exercise
- Helping Others
- Pets!!



*"No one else is supposed to
understand your calling,
it wasn't a conference call"*

- Glennon Doyle



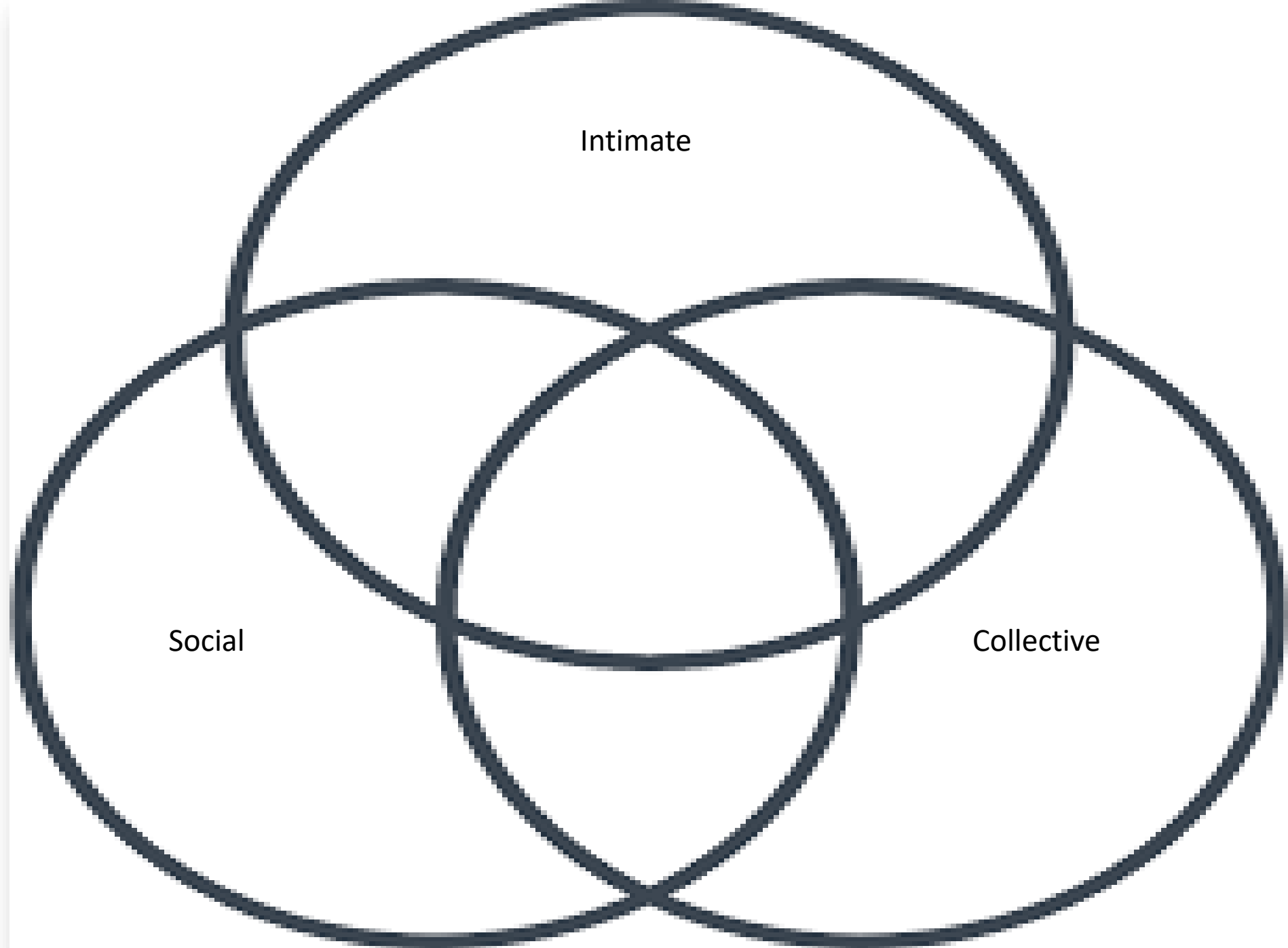
Consequences of Connection

Longer, healthier life

Regulation of heart rate and respiration rate

Increased immune response to illness and wounds

50% decrease in pre-mature death



References and Resources

