

**AgingWell**  
CARE THAT  
EVOLVES AS WE DO

# Social Connection

MODERATOR

Eunice Lin Nichols

PANELISTS

Carla Perissinotto, MD

Carlene Davis, MPA

Supervisor David Canepa



KAISER PERMANENTE®

# CAN INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTION HEAL US?

This report is about the critical role community organizations play in bringing generations together to reduce social isolation and loneliness.



EXPLORE  
THEM ALL



## Key Findings:

01 – THE RUB	Enough about the problem.
02 – THE NEWS	Age-gap friendships are IN.
03 – THE FIX	Why age-gap friendships work.
04 – THE FIELD	Diverse and growing.
05 – THE SPARKS	Curiosity and courage.
06 – THE METHODS	Creativity speeds connection.
07 – THE GLUE	Trust.
08 – THE INEVITABLE	Conflict.
09 – THE FUTURE	Virtual and IRL.
10 – THE NEED	5 keys to progress.

[cogenerate.org/loneliness/](https://cogenerate.org/loneliness/)



# Social Connection Speakers



**Carla Perissinotto, MD**

Professor,  
Division of Geriatrics,  
Department of  
Medicine, UCSF



**Carlene Davis, MPA**

Board Member,  
Village Movement  
California



**David Canepa**

President of the Board  
of Supervisors,  
San Mateo County

# The Science of Social Connection

- **Carla Perissinotto, MD MHS**
  - *Professor of Medicine*
  - Division of Geriatrics, University of California San Francisco
  - *Chief Medical Officer*
  - Sabio Health and Get Aging
- October 2025



GET AGING



All are Welcome

All Genders

All Orientations

All colors

ALL IMMIGRANTS  
All religions & cultures

All ages & sizes

All abilities

all means ALL

**2001:** I started Medical School

**2002:** John Cacioppo, Louise Hawkley publish "[Loneliness and health: potential mechanisms.](#)"

MEDICAL EXAMINER

## Loneliness Is Deadly

Social isolation kills more people than obesity does—and it's just as stigmatized.

By JESSICA OLIEN

AUG 23, 2013 • 12:15 PM

## An Epidemic of Loneliness in America?

Does it exist, and if so, what is the cause, and what can be done?

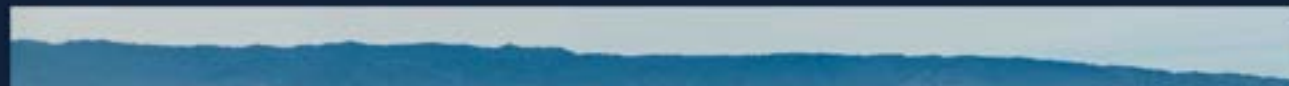
Dec. 8, 2018



**2024:**

## Silicon Valley county becomes first in U.S. to declare loneliness a public health emergency

A mountain of research has linked loneliness to an increased risk of dementia, depression, anxiety, heart disease, stroke and early death.

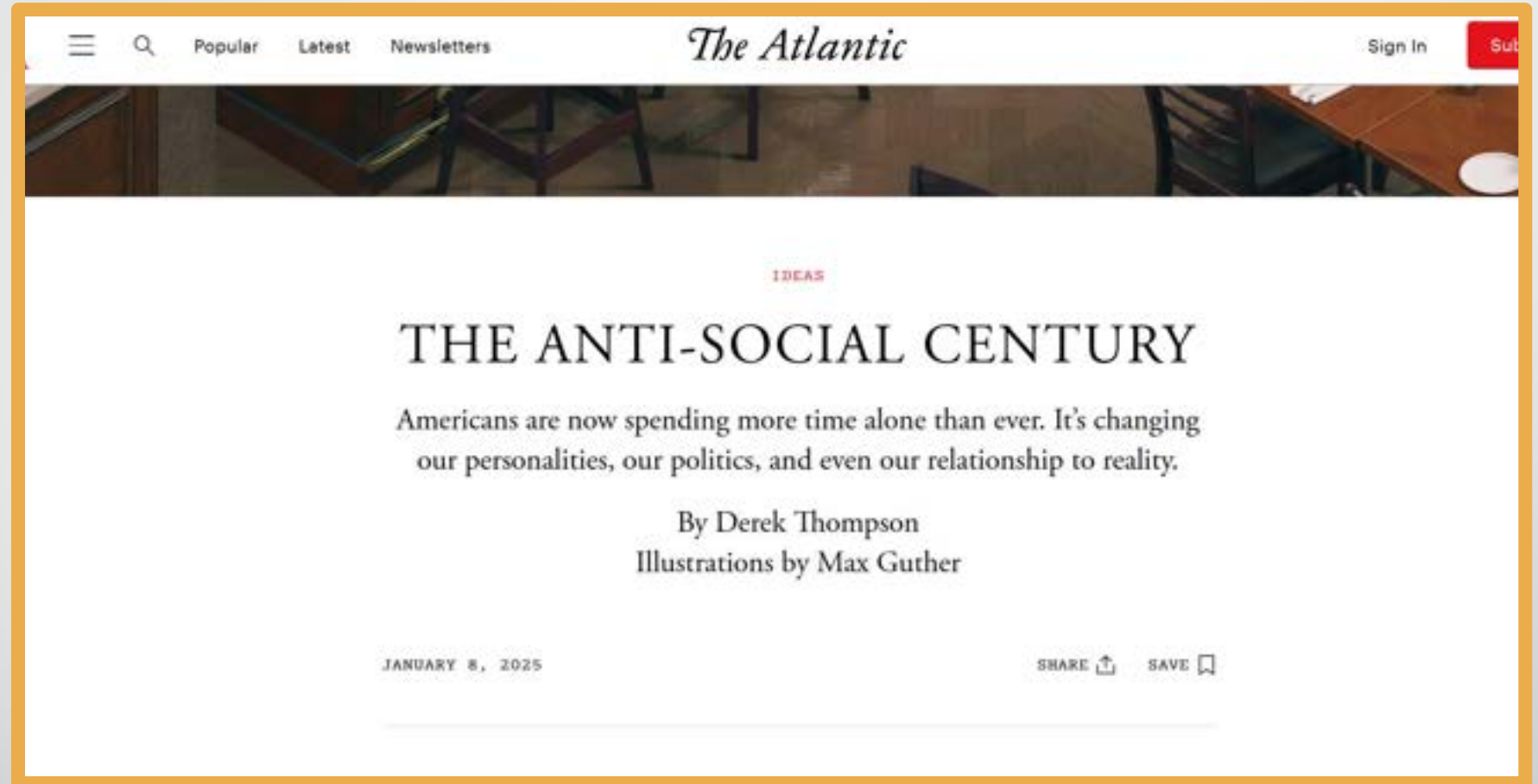


**2001:**

I started Medical School

**2002:**

**2025:**



# SOCIAL HEALTH: THE MISSING PILLAR

Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not just the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO Constitution, 1948).



WHO COMMISSION 2025

# Remembering: 2005-2025



## A Piece of My Mind

July 5, 2022

## The True Cause of Death

Carla M. Perissinotto, MD, MHS<sup>1</sup>

[» Author Affiliations](#)

JAMA. 2022;328(1):19-20. doi:10.1001/jama.2022.10406

I had met him at the Over 60 Health Center, a clinic founded by and created for the Gray Panthers, to serve the aging Black Panthers and others in the community. And now a short decade later, he is gone. A self-described lifelong revolutionary, a Black Panther and member of the Black August organizing committee, Roy's life was filled with stories, and those stories culminating into his immediate cause of death—metastatic cancer. His other

Social

2020 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine

The National Academies of SCIENCES ENGINEERING MEDICINE

ABOUT US PUBLICATIONS ACTIVITY

Activity

The Health and Medical Isolation and Loneliness

From loneliness

to social connection

Charting a path to healthier societies

Report of the WHO Commission on Social Connection



on General Advisory

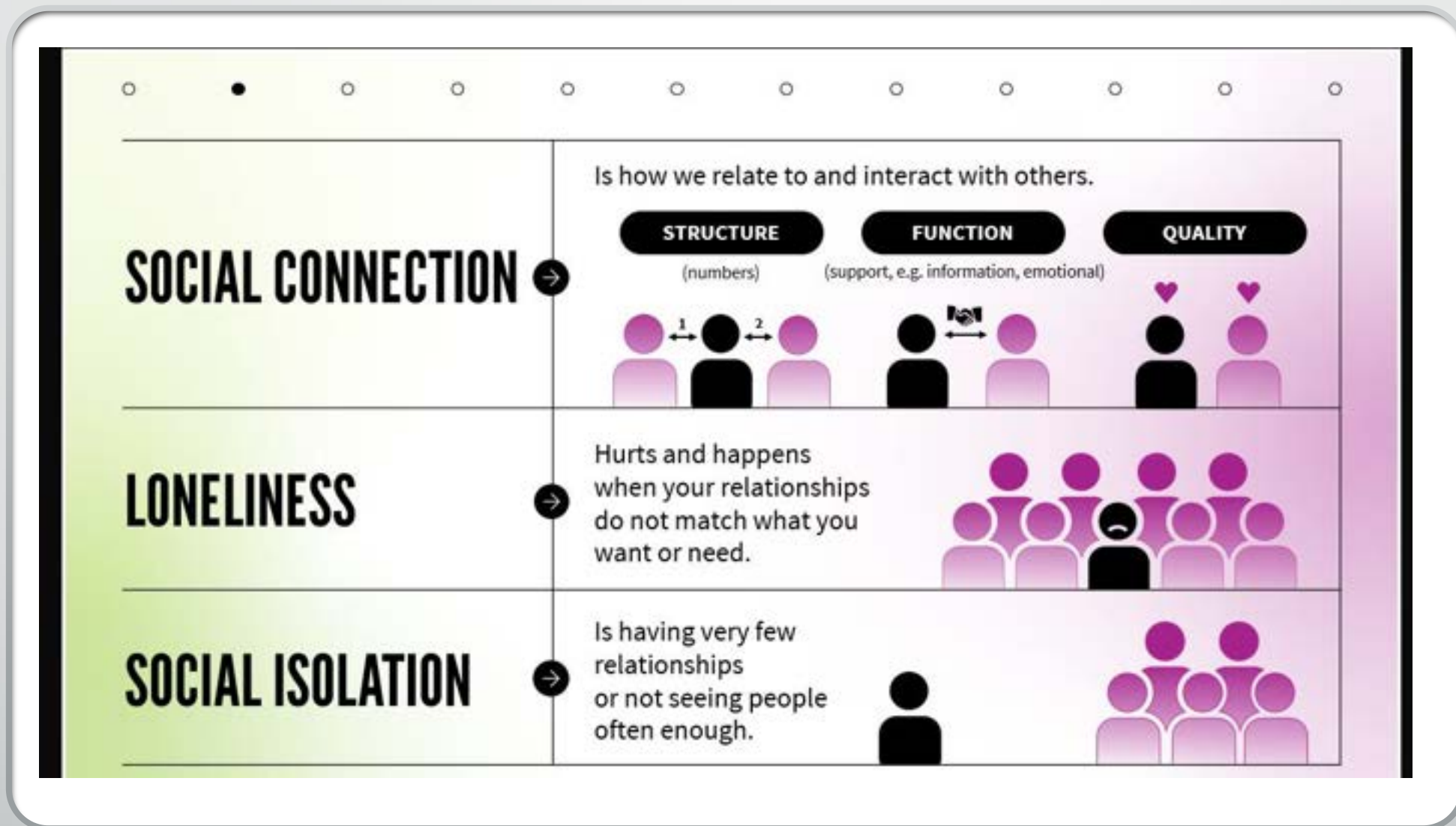
Epidemiology and Global Health

Loneliness Isolation 2023

on General's Advisory on the of Social Connection and Community

20XX

10



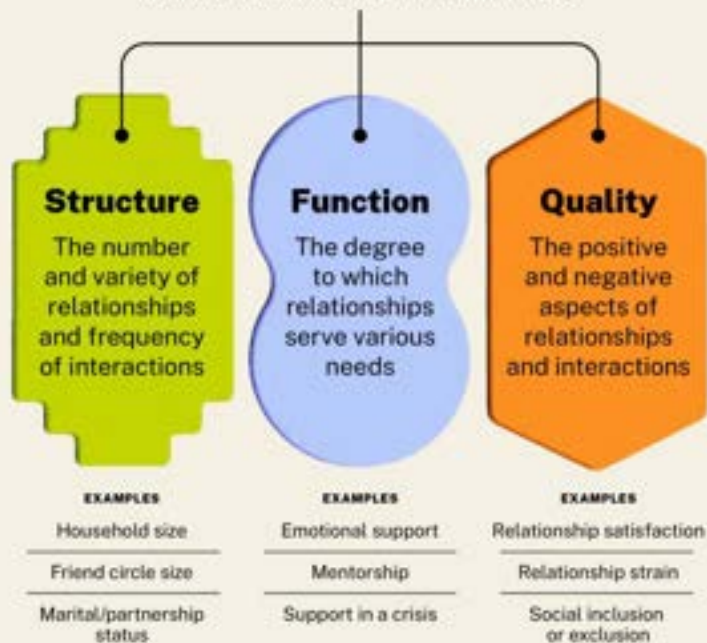
WHO Commission on Social Connection

# Redefining Social Connection

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW

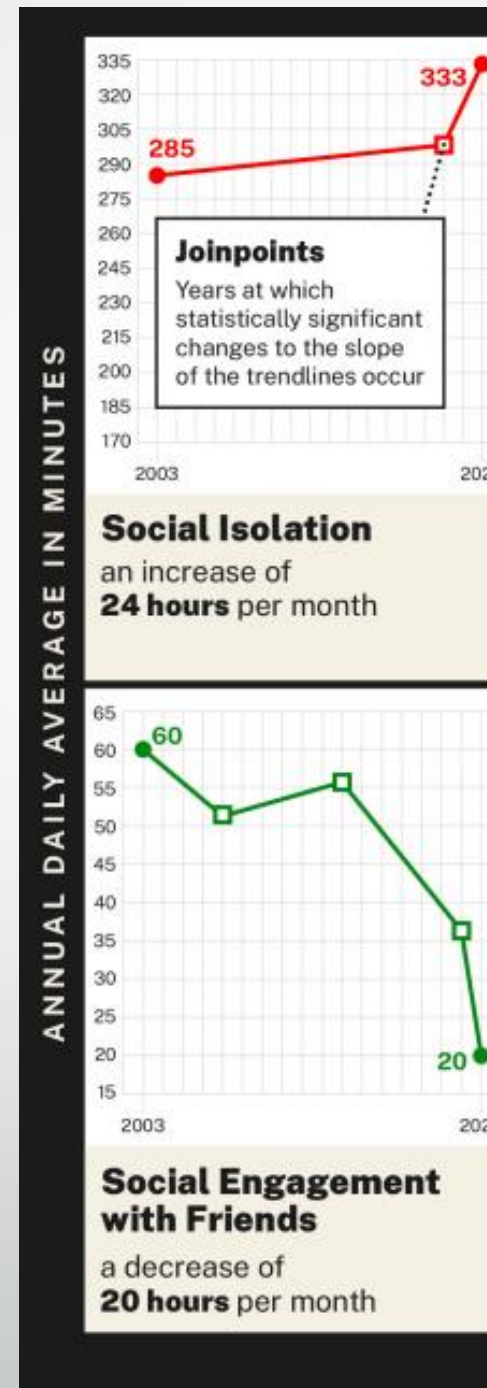
## The Three Vital Components of Social Connection

The extent to which an individual is socially connected depends on multiple factors, including:



# TRENDS IN SOCIAL CONNECTION (2003-2020)

<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>





WHO Commission on Social Connection



SHOULD WE “SOLVE”  
LONELINESS?

# Loneliness in Older Persons: A Predictor of Functional Decline and Death

Carla Perissinotto, MD, MHS, Irena Cenzer, MA, Kenneth Covinsky, MD, MPH

National survey of 1604 adults aged >60 followed for 6 years

Asked if they were lonely - UCLA Loneliness Scale

## Results:

- Loneliness is common
  - 43% of older adults
  - 66% of married individuals
  - 25% of individuals living alone
- Worse health outcomes
  - Increased mortality: 23% vs 14%, aOR: 1.5 (1.1-1.9) → 45%
  - ADL impairment: 25% vs 13%, aOR: 1.6 (1.2-2.1) → 59% increase risk

# SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS HAVE SERIOUS IMPACTS

→ Harm physical and mental **health**



Reduce **life expectancy**.  
Loneliness causes

→ **870 000  
DEATHS A YEAR**



→ Cost society **billions** in terms  
of health care, education  
and employment

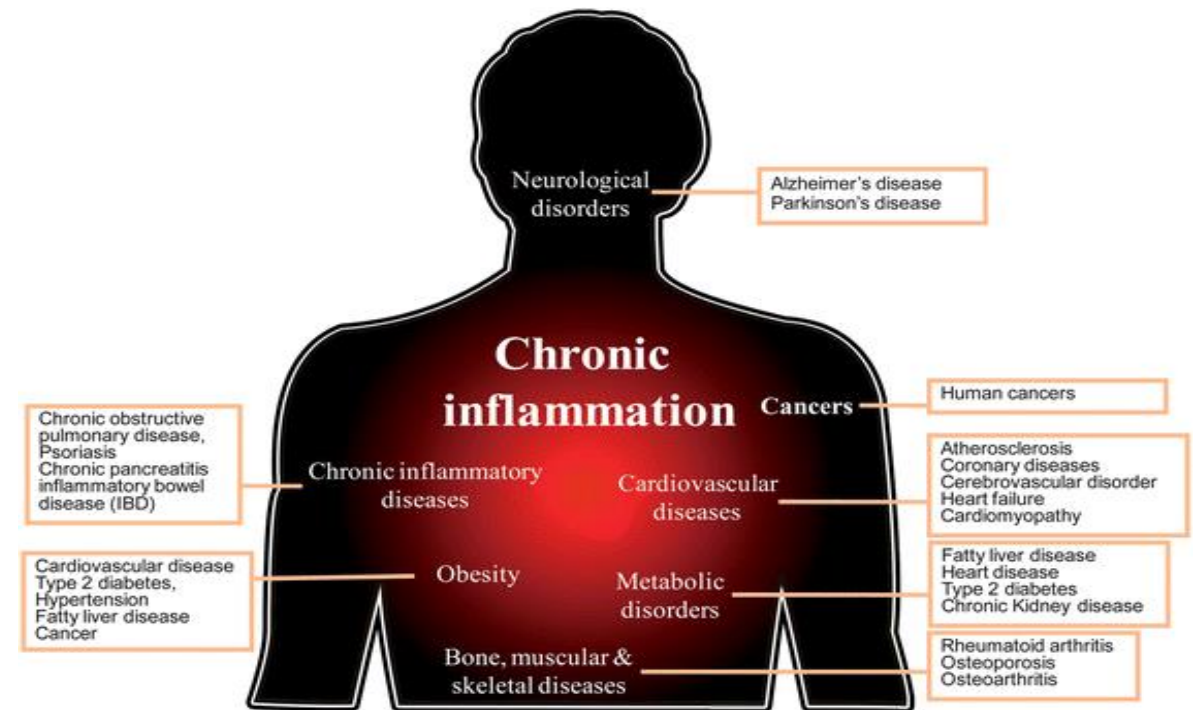


WHO Commission on Social  
Connection

# Mechanisms through which Loneliness impacts health

- Emotional distress -> Stress sresponse
  - *Sleep*
  - *Motor function*
  - *“Wear and tear” on our body*

- Health Behaviors
- Receipt of Medical Care



# The positive effects of social connection

Reduced all cause mortality

Lower incidence of heart disease

Improved mental health

Enhanced overall well-being

WHY: "buffers: against chronic stress, modulates inflammatory pathways → disease protection

E: Educate

A: Assess

R:  
Respond

INDIVIDUAL



The NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL of MEDICINE

Perspective  
JANUARY 19, 2023

## Social Isolation and Loneliness as Medical Issues

Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Ph.D., and Carla Perissinotto, M.D., M.H.S.

In the spring of 2021, one of us (J.H.-L.) lost both her parents, within 17 days of each other — but Covid-19 was not the direct cause of either death. As is the case for many families trying to protect

directly discussed; other times, they become evident indirectly — manifesting, for instance, in overuse of clinic services because there is no one to help with med-



# Current Gaps

- Measurement in different settings
- Non-dominant communities
- Evidence-based solutions (individual and population level)
  
- Who's responsibility is it to "solve"
- Can Social Prescribing work in the US (how formal or informal)

Social  
Infrastructure

Social  
Prescribing

Community  
Groups

**Creating  
Community**



COUNTY OF  
SAN MATEO

CALIFORNIA  
VOLUNTEERS

Office of the Governor



# Factors That Can Shape Social Connection



## Individual

- Chronic disease
- Sensory and functional impairments
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Personality
- Race
- Gender
- Socioeconomic status
- Life stage

## Relationships

- Structure, function, and quality
- Household size
- Characteristics and behaviors of others
- Empathy

## Community

- Outdoor space
- Housing
- Schools
- Workplace
- Local government
- Local business
- Community organizations
- Health care
- Transportation

## Society

- Norms and values
- Public policies
- Tech environment and use
- Civic engagement
- Democratic norms
- Historical inequities

Office of the  
U.S. Surgeon General



# POLICY PRIORITIES

National Strategy

Health Insurance benefits supporting social needs

Older adults at the table

WHO is designing and WHAT is being designed for (and with) older adults

Integration of medical and social care

Discussions on ethics and privacy



- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p><b>1</b><br/><b>Strengthen Social Infrastructure in Local Communities</b></p> <p>Design the built environment to promote social connection</p> <p>Establish and scale community connection programs</p> <p>Invest in local institutions that bring people together</p> | <p><b>2</b><br/><b>Enact Pro-Connection Public Policies</b></p> <p>Adopt a "Connection-in-All-Policies" approach</p> <p>Advance policies that minimize harm from disconnection</p> <p>Establish cross-departmental leadership at all levels of government</p> | <p><b>3</b><br/><b>Mobilize the Health Sector</b></p> <p>Train health care providers</p> <p>Assess and support patients</p> <p>Expand public health surveillance and interventions</p>  |
| <p><b>4</b><br/><b>Reform Digital Environments</b></p> <p>Require data transparency</p> <p>Establish and implement safety standards</p> <p>Support development of pro-connection technologies</p>   | <p><b>5</b><br/><b>Deepen Our Knowledge</b></p> <p>Develop and coordinate a national research agenda</p> <p>Accelerate research funding</p> <p>Increase public awareness</p>  | <p><b>6</b><br/><b>Build a Culture of Connection</b></p> <p>Cultivate values of kindness, respect, service, and commitment to one another</p> <p>Model connection values in positions of leadership and influence</p> <p>Expand conversation on social connection in schools, workplaces, and communities</p> |

# SOCIAL CONNECTION WEEK

OCT. 6TH-10<sup>TH</sup>, 2025

Coalition for  
Social Connection  
**UCSF**  
University of California  
San Francisco

**06**

OCT, 2025

## BUILDING COALITIONS FOR SOCIAL CONNECTION

Hear from coalition leaders on how to mobilize community impact.

Zoom Webinar | 12-1pm PT

**07**

OCT, 2025

## RESOURCE FAIR & PANEL

Learn about social connection resources available in your community!

San Francisco Main Public Library | 1-4pm

**08**

OCT, 2025

## BRIDGING NEIGHBORS & GENERATIONS

Learn how to improve your intergenerational efforts with experts and networking time!

Zoom Workshop | 10-11:15amPT

**09**

OCT, 2025

## COMMUNITY CELEBRATION!

Join us for an evening of social connection and fun! Open to all community members.

Ruth's Table, San Francisco | 5:30-7:30pm

**10**

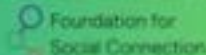
OCT, 2025

## SPREAD THE WORD!

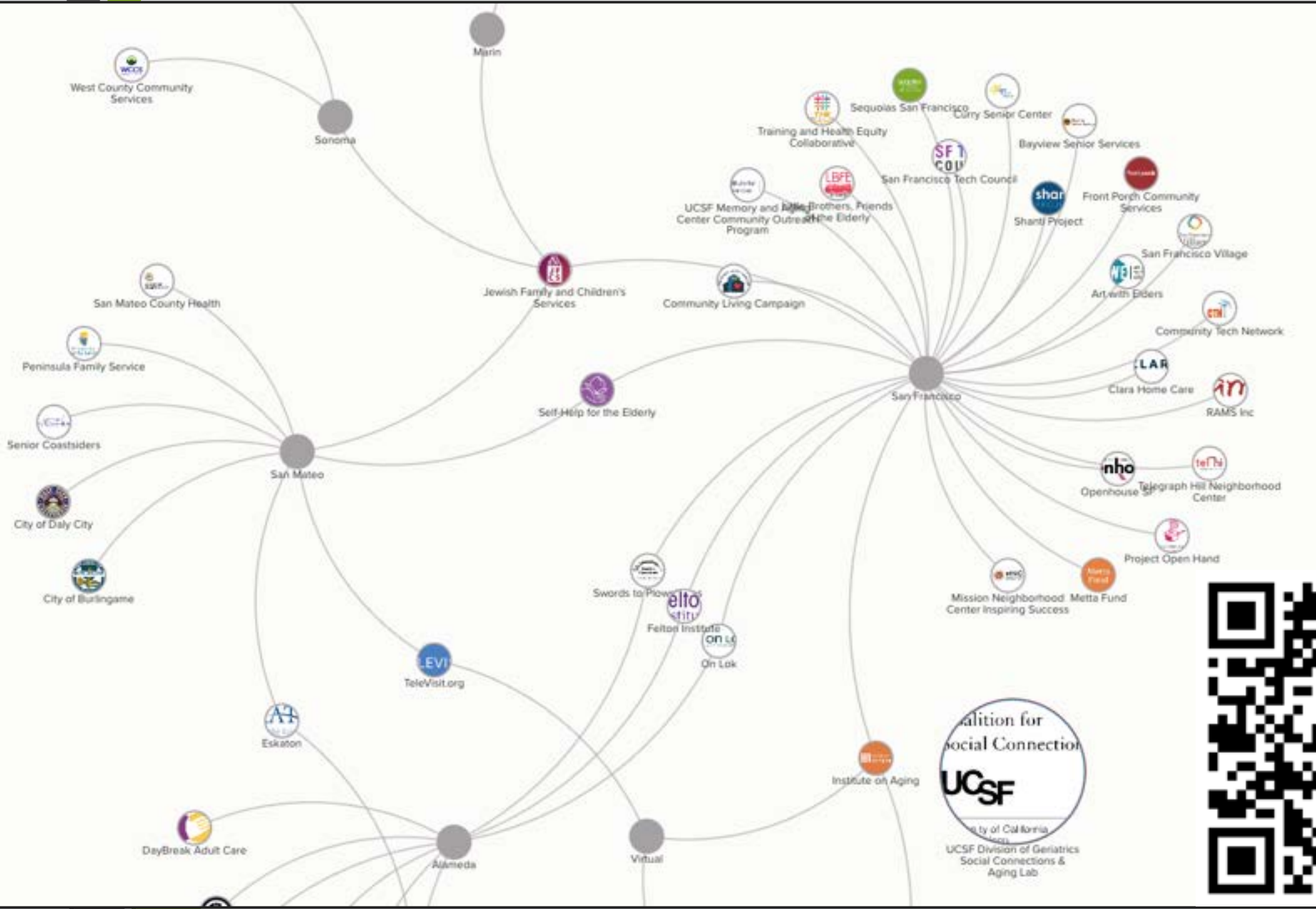
Help launch the Meet 6 Neighbors campaign and share your social connection stories.

Materials available on our website.

VISIT [SOCIALCONNECTIONSANDAGING.UCSF.EDU](https://socialconnectionsandaging.ucsf.edu) TO REGISTER AND LEARN MORE.



# NorCal Coalition for Social Connection at UCSF





# *Sage* Sistahs

AGING WITH GRACE & ELEGANCE





# Vision

Create a dynamic and connected network of Black women in their Fabulous 40s, Phenomenal 50s, Sensuous 60s, Sensational 70s, Elegant 80s, Naughty 90s, and beyond who are flourishing at every stage of the aging journey.

# Mission

Empower Black women with the knowledge, tools, resources, and supports to maintain optimal physical and mental well-being; strategically manage their financial means; age-in-place and community for as long as desired and possible; and to experience caring and connected family and social relationships.



Championship  
Photography

CALIFORNIA BLACK WOMEN'S  
HEALTH PROJECT



WWW.CABWHP.ORG



**The Sankofa  
Elders Project**  
**Black Elders Organizing For Health  
Equity In Their Communities**

*Powered By*




*Advancing Health Equity Initiative*



**The Sankofa Elders Project, is an Equity Community Organizing (ECO) Group funded by the SCAN Foundation, California Health Care Foundation, and the Metta Fund**





*How might we, together,  
use our wisdom, lived  
experiences, and voices to  
create a vision for the dignity,  
care, wellbeing, and belonging of  
Black elders in Los Angeles  
County?*

# BLACK ELDERING BILL OF RIGHTS:

## A COMMUNITY MANIFESTO FOR THE CARE AND BELONGING OF BLACK ELDERS



# BLACK ELDERING BILL OF RIGHTS PRINCIPLES

-  1. BLACK ELDERS DESERVE TO BE RESPECTED FOR THEIR TRUTHS AND LIVED EXPERIENCES
-  2. BLACK ELDERS DESERVE THE RIGHT TO SELF-ACTUALIZATION
-  3. BLACK ELDERS DESERVE THE RIGHT TO PROTECTION AND AGENCY
-  4. BLACK ELDERS DESERVE THE RIGHT TO FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE
-  5. BLACK ELDERS DESERVE THE RIGHT TO AGE IN PLACE IN ELDER-AFFIRMING NEIGHBORHOODS
-  6. BLACK ELDERS DESERVE THE RIGHT TO BENEFIT FROM TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS AND INNOVATION
-  7. BLACK ELDERS DESERVE THE RIGHT TO AGE IN BELOVED COMMUNITIES OF CARE AND CONNECTION
-  8. BLACK ELDERS DESERVE THE RIGHT TO HIGH-QUALITY HEALTH CARE
-  9. BLACK ELDERS DESERVE THE RIGHT TO DETERMINE THEIR ANCESTRAL PATH AND END-OF-LIFE CARE





**Notes From The Field:**  
**A Vision for the Formation of the**  
**Sankofa Elders Intergenerational Village**



# Theory of Change

We must return to our ancestral tradition of honoring aging as a collective rites of passage and not as an individual test of mettle.



## San Mateo County becomes 1st in US to declare loneliness as health emergency

By Tim Johns  
Tuesday, January 30, 2024



MENTAL HEALTH

## Silicon Valley county becomes first in U.S. to declare loneliness a public health emergency

A mountain of research has linked loneliness to an increased risk of dementia, depression, anxiety, heart disease, stroke and early death.

## San Mateo Co. launches campaign to combat growing loneliness epidemic

By Zach Fuentes  
Saturday, March 16, 2024



FEATURED

## San Mateo County to dedicate \$1 million to loneliness epidemic

Peninsula Family Service hosts 9th Thought Leader Series event

By Ana Mata, Daily Journal staff Apr 8, 2024 Updated Nov 27, 2024 4