

## **Loss, Loneliness and Depression**

By: Lesly Castro Harris and Kathey Fortin

Loss, loneliness and depression can affect anyone: no matter how old, gender, income level, or obtained education. Loss, loneliness and depression can affect your health. In 2010 AARP did a study and found that 35% of those surveyed over age 45 were chronically lonely (Edmondson, 2010). In 2015 one study estimated that the rates of depression among older adults could be close to 20%. Loneliness, loss and depression are strongly linked together.

Loss can be a major contributor to depression and loneliness and may come from many sources. Examples of unintended social support loss include losing co-workers when you retire, losing friends as they age and pass away, losing your spouse, and a decline in physical function or inability to do the things you were once able to do. You may feel uneasy in talking with medical providers however, they can help guide you to resources that can assist you to feel better. Medical providers are specially trained to be able to help you through these difficult feelings and the losses affecting your life. Depression can have some of the same feelings but also sleeplessness or sleeping too much, memory problems, feelings of hopelessness or despair, crying, lack of appetite, losing interest in hobbies or things that you once enjoyed doing, and withdrawal from friends or family.

What are some things that can help you feel less lonely or depressed? In the AARP study they found that staying connected through social interactions is the best medicine to help reduce the loneliness factor. Some things to do may include:

- Volunteering

- Keeping up with personal relationships with face-to-face contact rather than electronic methods like Facebook or email.
- Joining a social club or community organization
- Stay in touch with former co-workers even after you retire
- Institute for Aging-Friendship line is a resource you can use from your home if you are feeling lonely, depressed, bereaved, isolated or suicidal. The helpline is 1-800-971-0016
- Most importantly talk with your healthcare provider if you're having any of these feelings. They can help you to feel better!

(Edmondson, 2010)

## References

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