

WELL BALANCED^o

- MAY 2024 -
Loneliness in the Workplace Month



The World Health Organization is declaring loneliness to be a pressing global health threat, its mortality effects equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. We all have a unique opportunity to help combat the loneliness epidemic by fostering connection and belongingness within our organizations and communities.

There are many ways to build community, but according to Dr. Jeremy Nobel, MD, MPH, and Founder of Project Unlonely, one way is by engaging in creative projects—connecting with yourself and others through the process of making things! Here are some tips from Dr. Nobel to get you thinking more about this strategy:

» **Be Curious**

It's easier to connect with people if you have shared interests or experiences, so start paying attention to what's on your mind. If you know what's meaningful or fun for you, it may lead you to an activity or creative outlet that connects you to people who share your interests.



"Just like thirst is a signal you need hydration, loneliness is a signal that you need human connection."

Dr. Jeremy Nobel
MD, MPH, and Founder of Project Unlonely

» **Make Something**

Do a doodle or a dance move. Resurrect your grandma's pie recipe, plant an herb garden, try a textile art. Make something that puts your thoughts and feelings and vision about who you are and what matters into a tangible artifact that then can express those thoughts and feelings to others.



Want more resources on combating loneliness?

WELCOA and NWI have a wealth of resources on the topic, from a handy e-book and interesting podcast episodes, to helpful infographics and inspiring articles.

» **Take a Risk by Having Conversations**

Share something about yourself. It doesn't have to be the biggest, darkest secret of your life, but something you think other people might find interesting and compelling, and see where it goes. If you've made something—say your doodle or dance move or pie—this can be a catalyst to sharing. Simply explaining what you've made may make it easier to open up about who you are.

» **Find a Group That Matches Your Interests**

Whether it's volunteering for a cause you believe in or playing frisbee or Scrabble, try to find others who share your interests. Through those interactions, you can begin to reveal yourself and share the unique things that matter to you. Then, other people share their stories in return, and it's like an electric circuit is connected.

» **Other People's Loneliness Matters Too**

Loneliness can spiral. If the pangs of loneliness go unaddressed, people can end up in a world of hurt. If you see someone who's experiencing loneliness, tolerate the risk of asking them how they're doing. Be kind. Be willing to share something about your own experiences of loneliness, and take that risk.

1. <https://www.ifebp.org/docs/default-source/pdf/resources---news/nebd/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf> 2. <https://www.artandhealing.org/unlonely-project/>