



Social Prescribing for Global Loneliness



Prof Jill Litt

Loneliness is one of the most pressing social challenges of our time, affecting people across all continents, cultures, and age groups. While often thought of as a personal emotion, loneliness has far-reaching consequences for public health, economic productivity, and societal wellbeing.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, levels of loneliness spiked around the world. In the UK alone, between April 2020 and February 2021, the number of people who reported feeling lonely 'often' or 'always' rose from 5% to 7.2% equivalent to 3.7 million adults. Similar patterns were reported globally, from Canada and Australia to India and Brazil, as lockdowns and distancing measures separated people from their communities.

Loneliness is not simply about being alone it's about feeling disconnected. While solitude can be healthy and restorative, chronic loneliness can have harmful effects on both short-term and long-term health. It disrupts behaviors critical to wellbeing such as sleep, diet, physical activity, and social relationships, and increases the risk of depression, cognitive decline, and even premature death. Left unaddressed, loneliness becomes a serious public health issue. The economic toll is also significant: in the UK alone, workplace loneliness costs employers over £2.5 billion each year. Recognizing the severity of the problem, Japan has even appointed a Minister of Loneliness to lead national efforts to tackle the crisis.

Continue reading.

"Group-facilitated nature-based social prescribing offers an innovative pathway to work with individuals and communities to alleviate loneliness and promote health-related quality of life. By bridging nature-based solutions and health systems, NBSP taps into the power of nature and social dynamics to foster meaning, purpose, and belonging through tactile, emotional, and social experiences outdoors in nature, together."



Gareth Presch, CEO, WHIS

"Through simple, nature-based activities, blue social prescribing helps people feel seen, valued, and connected it's community care in its purest form."

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