



Loneliness @ Colleges of Art and Design

Urgency & Opportunity

AICAD Student Success Conference
June 14, 2023

Jeremy Nobel, MD, MPH
President, The Foundation for Art & Healing



Welcome!

Jeremy Nobel, MD, MPH

- President, Foundation for Art & Healing; Founder of Project UnLonely
- Faculty, Harvard Medical School; Harvard School of Public Health
- Poet + Photographer

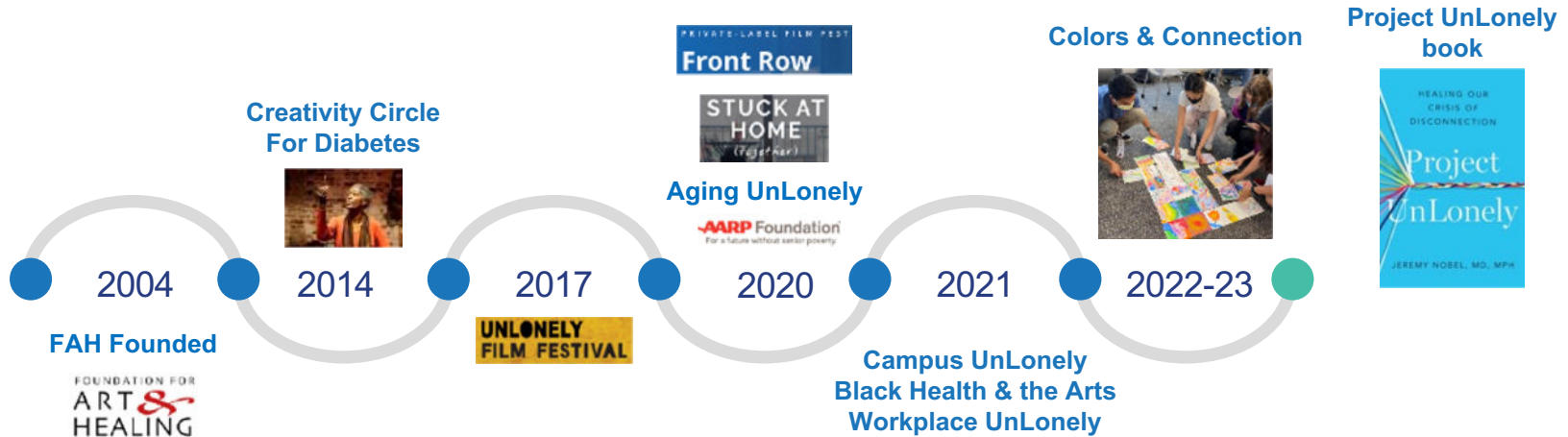


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The Foundation for Art & Healing: Mission and Background

"We champion and engage creative expression as a path towards improved health and wellbeing for individuals and communities."



Inspired • Compassionate • Nimble • Trusted



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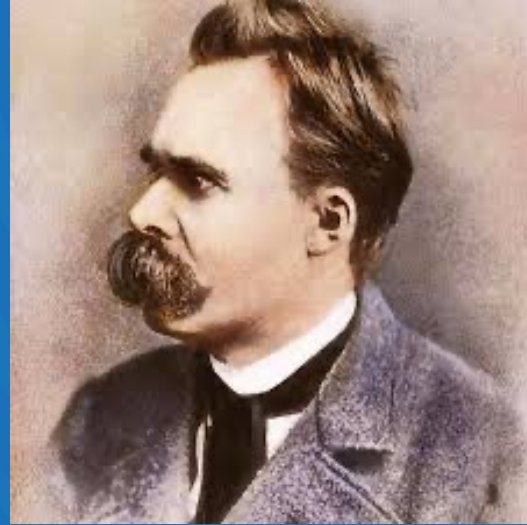


Leveraging
the power
of creative
arts!



**“We have art so
that we may not
die of reality.”**

- Friedrich Nietzsche



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The arts provide an intimacy with life, allowing us to engage with it in provocative and personal ways...



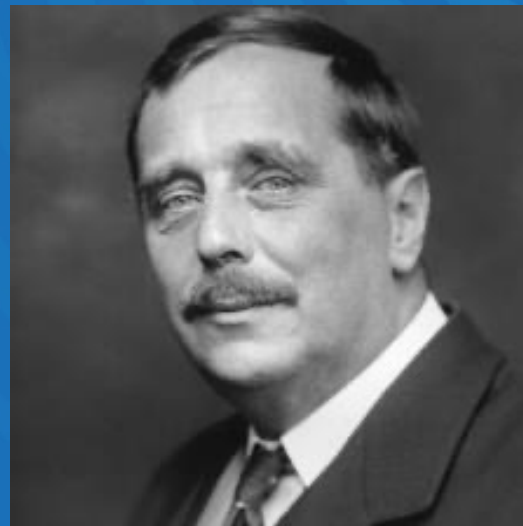
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A note of urgency

**“History is a race
between education
and catastrophe.”**

- H.G. Wells



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I'm here to introduce three big ideas...

Loneliness and social isolation
is the invisible epidemic of the
21st century.

***18–24 year olds are the
loneliest adult demographic!***

Creative expression connects
us, improving and sustaining
our health and wellbeing.



Uniting these two ideas is
a significant opportunity,
especially at schools for
art and design.



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College: a time of bliss and contentment



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Well, not exactly...

Certainly not *now*,
or maybe ever?



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Why is college such an “interesting” time?

- A time for trying things out
- Consequently, a time of exploration, transition, growth, and *uncertainty*



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Why is college such an “interesting” time?

“In order to BE anything,
you need to pretend to
be it first.”

– Oscar Wilde

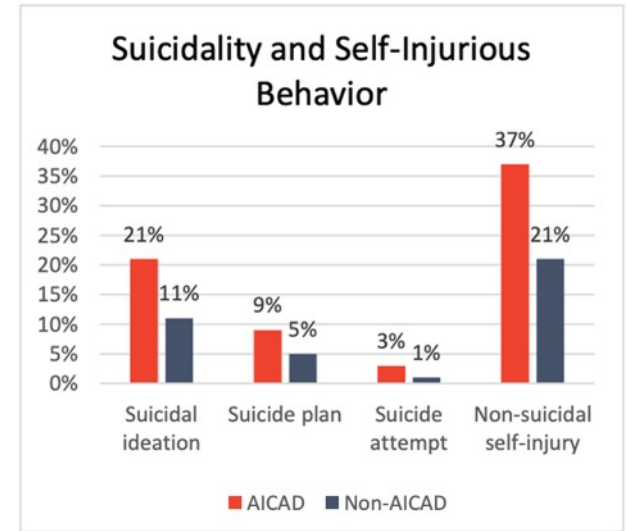
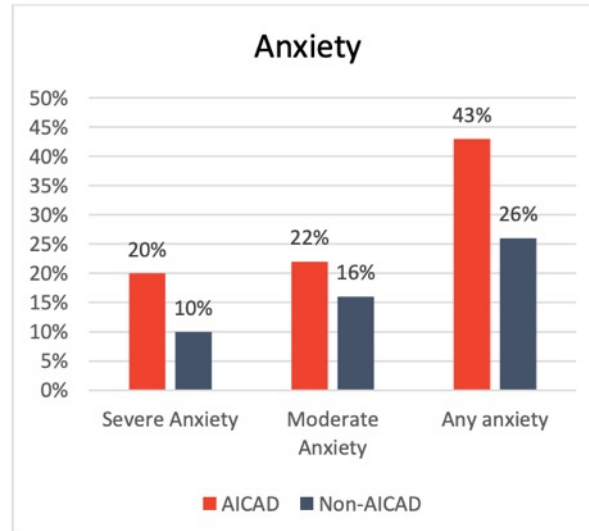
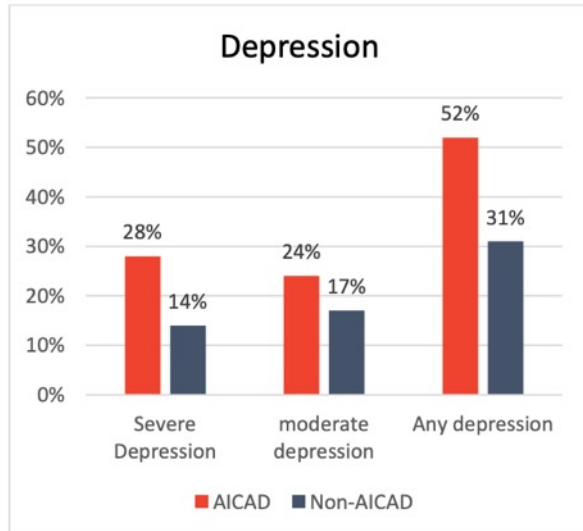


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Student mental health challenges appear greater at art schools

Healthy Minds Study, 2017-2018

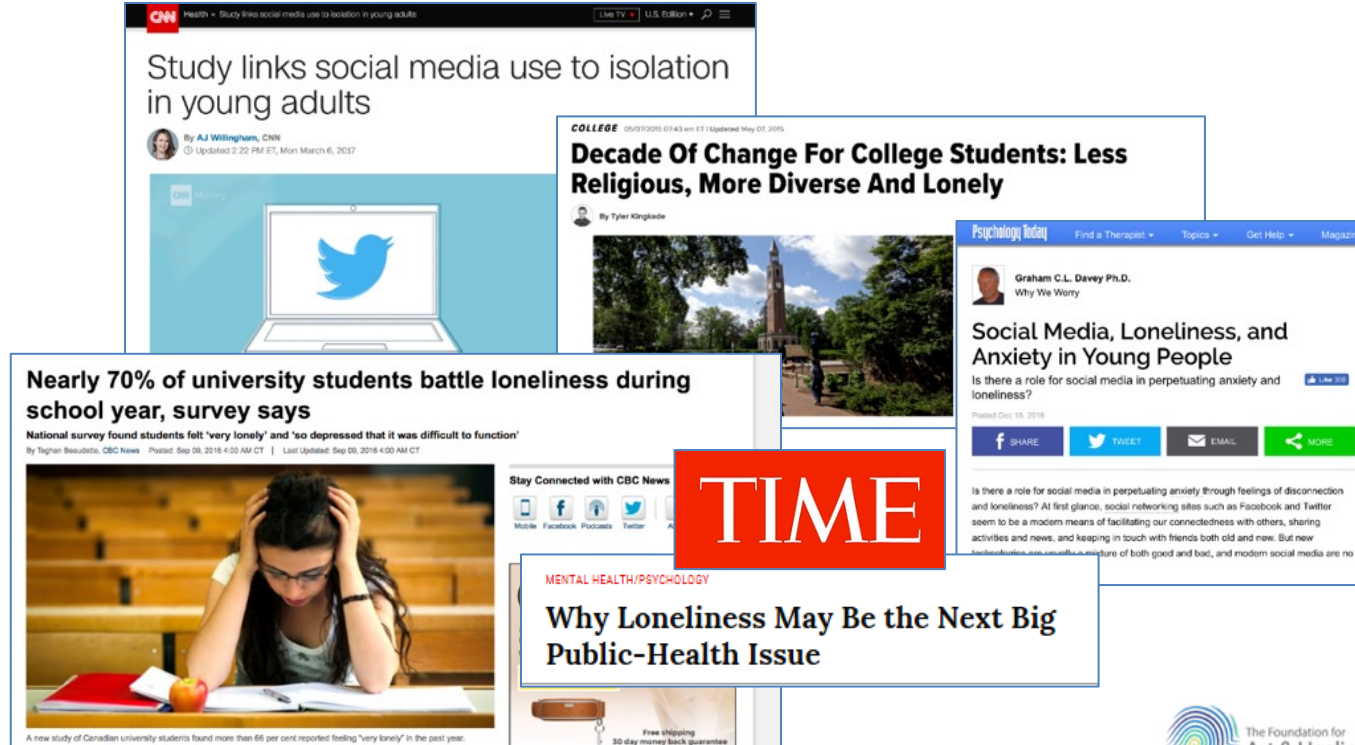


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One thing that's clear: loneliness is increasing on campus



Loneliness: a greater challenge at art schools

Healthy Minds Study,
2021-2022

**Loneliness is measured using the UCLA three-item Loneliness Scale (Hughes, Waite, Hawkley, & Cacioppo, 2004)*

How often do you feel that you...		
...lack companionship?	AICAD	Others
Often	31%	24%
Some of the time	45%	42%
Hardly ever	23%	34%
...are left out?	AICAD	Others
Often	34%	26%
Some of the time	46%	45%
Hardly ever	20%	29%
...are isolated from others?	AICAD	Others
Often	42%	30%
Some of the time	40%	40%
Hardly ever	18%	30%

**Loneliness corresponds to
the discrepancy between desired
and actual social relations.**



ABOUT 1:3 OF US ARE LONELY RIGHT NOW.





How loneliness matters to health



Mental

Depression
Addiction
Suicidality



Physical

Cardiovascular
Metabolic
Immunologic



Social

Engagement
Collaboration
Thriving



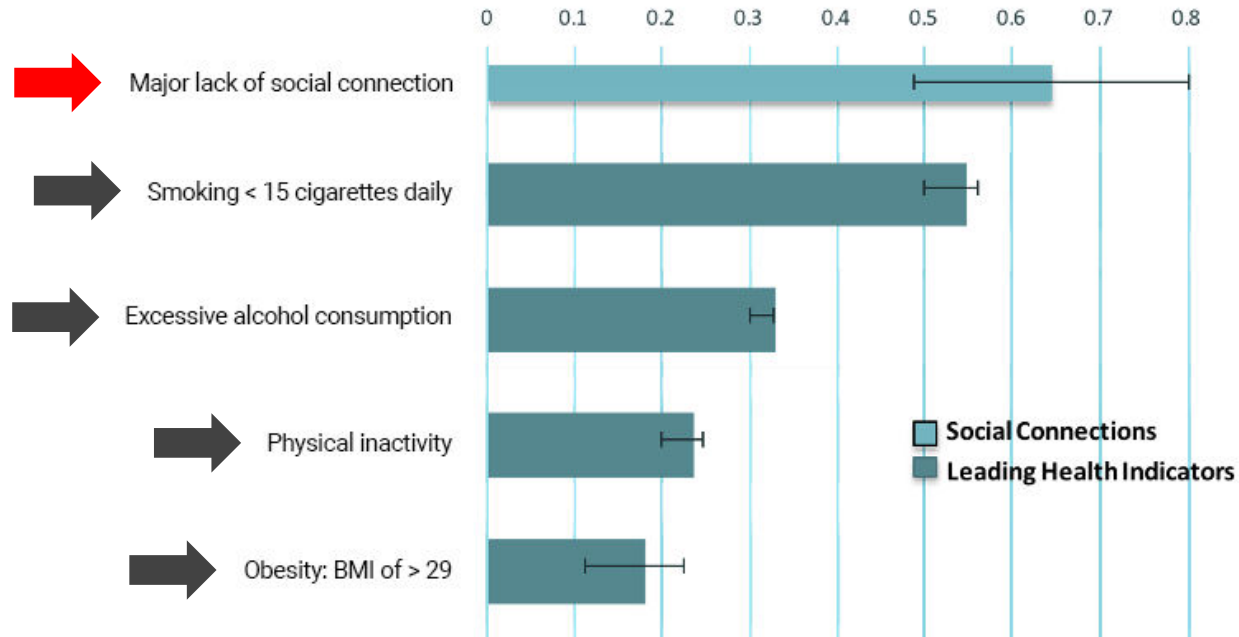
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WARNING: LONELINESS CAN BE AS LETHAL
AS SMOKING 15 CIGARETTES PER DAY.

Social connections have a profound effect on health, including life expectancy!



* Length of the bar indicates the risk of early death

(Holt-Lunstad, Robles, Sbarra, 2017)



**SOCIAL ISOLATION AND
LONELINESS ARE
ASSOCIATED WITH A
30% INCREASED RISK OF
HEART ATTACK, STROKE,
OR DEATH FROM EITHER.**

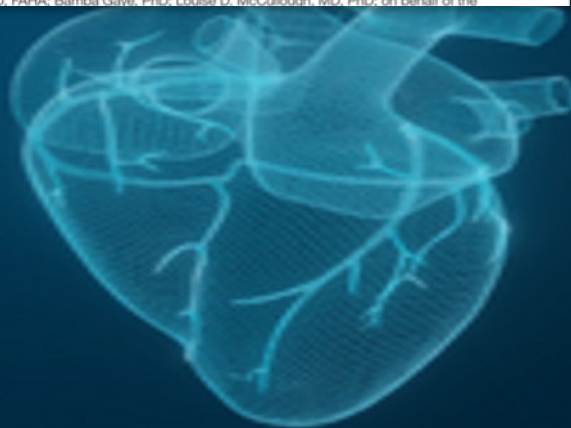
Journal of The American Heart
Association, 2022

Journal of the American Heart Association

AHA SCIENTIFIC STATEMENT

Effects of Objective and Perceived Social
Isolation on Cardiovascular and Brain
Health: A Scientific Statement From the
American Heart Association

Crystal W. Cené, MD, MPH, FAHA, Chair; Theresa M. Beckie, PhD, FAHA, Vice Chair; Mario Sims, PhD, FAHA;
Shakira F. Suglia, ScD, MS, FAHA; Brooke Aggarwal, EdD, MS, FAHA; Nathalie Moise, MD;
Monik C. Jiménez, SM, ScD, FAHA; Bamba Gaye, PhD; Louise D. McCullough, MD, PhD; on behalf of the



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Three types of loneliness



Interpersonal • Psychological

“Does someone have my back?”

“Is there someone I can tell my troubles to?”



Societal • Organizational

“Am I welcome and valued?”

“Am I safe?”



Existential • Spiritual

“Does my life matter?”

“Am I disposable?”

Imagine loneliness as a signal, just like thirst.
What is loneliness asking us to pay attention to?



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If loneliness is a signal that we need human connection, how is that achieved?



Lonely



Connected



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Here's the (not so) new idea...

- Why has there never been a culture without art?
- Maybe art, and the storytelling that it offers, connects us?
- Maybe connection helps us survive and thrive?



*Altamira, Spain
20,000 years old*



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The arts offer a unique way to...



Engage



Inspire



Empower



Connect



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**“Art does not
reproduce what
we see; rather,
it makes us see.”**

- Paul Klee



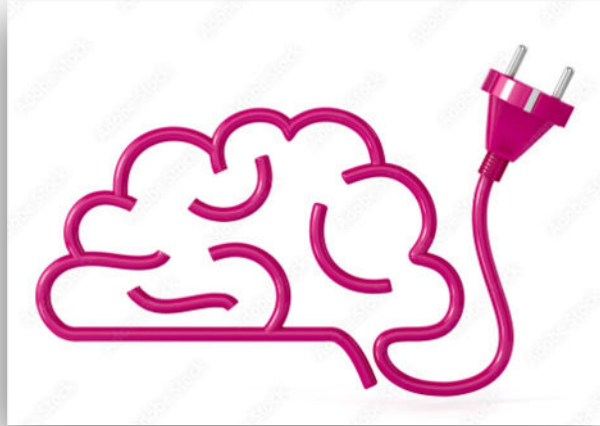
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A powerful underlying principle:

The arts rewire our brains



The arts stimulate thoughts, moods,
and feelings that change our brain
and our bodies...impacting our health!

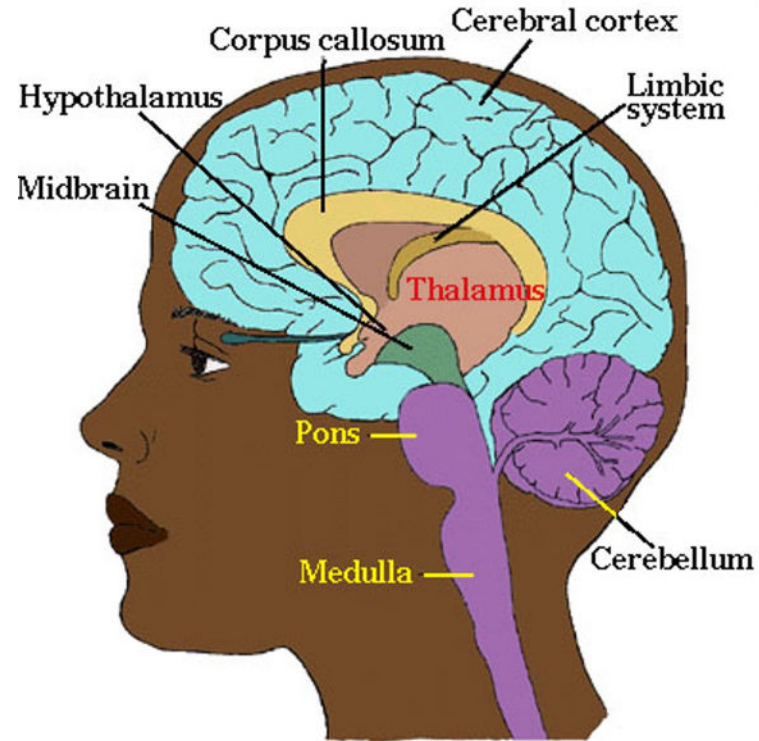


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The arts have an important physiologic impact

- **Neuro-endocrine Outflow**
 - Hormonal Regulation
 - Immune System
 - Somatic Organ Function
- **Autonomic Outflow**
 - Blood Pressure
 - Heart Rate
 - Respiration
- **Neuro-peptide Outflow**
 - Neurotransmitter Modulation
 - Mood and Emotion
 - Endorphins



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How creative expression improves health

create



“Experience the moment”
allows you to be in touch
with your “self”

share



The act of sharing your
emotions or perspective
with others

reflect



To contemplate and
reflect on messages
and ideas from others



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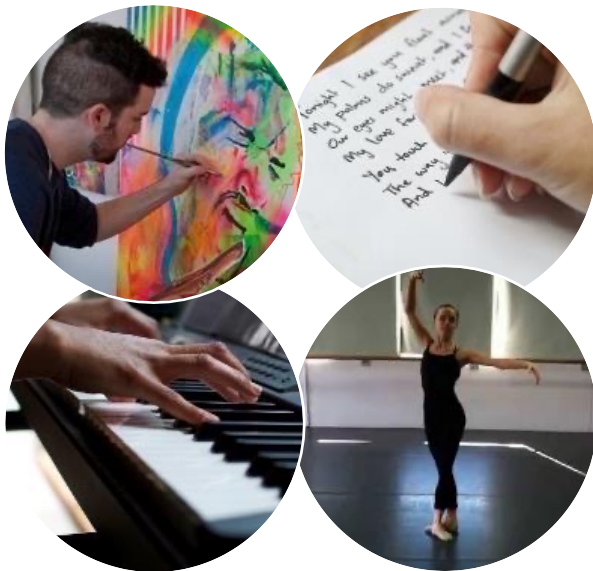
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All the arts work!

Traditional Four

Music • Visual Arts

Language Arts • Dance



Big Three

Culinary Arts • Textile Arts

Gardening



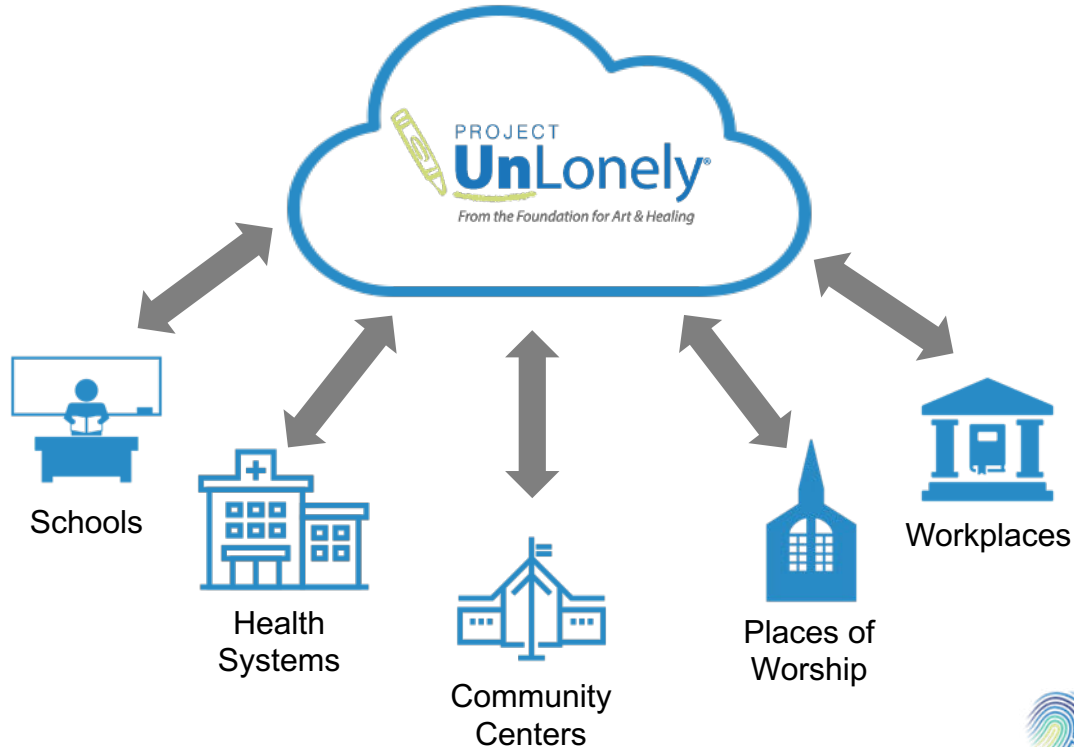
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*...a multi-faceted
initiative that seeks to
reduce the burden of
loneliness and its
stigma.*



Supporting the community with effective, scalable and sustainable programs



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FAH Programs: deliverable in-person and virtual



Impact Events

Awareness



School of the Art Institute
of Chicago



Workshops

Sampling

essie



Multi-Session Group

Skills Development

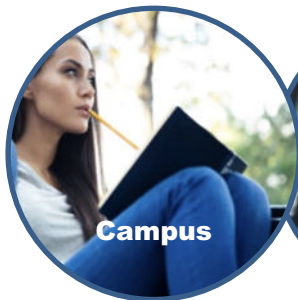
AARP Foundation



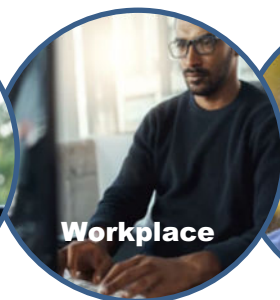
Connectivity Environment

Resource Aggregation

 **Northwell Health**



Campus



Workplace



Aging



Community



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What does creative expression offer?

- A fun and non-threatening way to engage people of all ages and in any circumstance
- Activates people, emotionally and intellectually; giving people a chance to express who they are and what matters to them
- Promotes a general sense of wellbeing and belonging; changing attitudes and behaviors



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Colleges of art and design are uniquely challenged

- Mental health issues appear greater than at other colleges
- Certain educational methods, notably “critique”, may be especially difficult for some students
- Uncertainty about post graduation realities “looms large” for some, prompting anxiety and early withdrawal



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On the flip side, engagement with art and design in college offers some unique benefits

- Creativity and imagination *enable powerful ways to explore the world* in sustaining ways
- Creative art-making can build specific life navigation skills that offer *a path to personal fulfillment* and external validation
- Recognition of the arts as *critical to our society* is growing worldwide, *offering expanded career opportunities*



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What can be done RIGHT NOW to support students at colleges of art and design?

1

Curate and celebrate a culture of belonging

2

Engage students with ways to put creative skills to work in ways that are neither performative or comparative

3

Offer opportunities to use creative and design skills to assist others as a way to “connect through caring”



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1

Belonging: a foundational element



Diversity

Getting invited
to the party



Inclusion

Being asked
to dance



Belonging

Having a good time and
being eager to dance again



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2

Using creativity to connect

Campus Colors & Connection: a fun, engaging, and simple one hour workshop that uses color to inspire connection

Workshop Components:

- Art-making
- Mindfulness
- Conversation



**We'll provide (almost*)
all the tools you'll need!**

- Curriculum
- Facilitator's guide
- Materials list
- Survey tools
- Promotional flyers

*crayons and cardstock



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Be curious



Make things

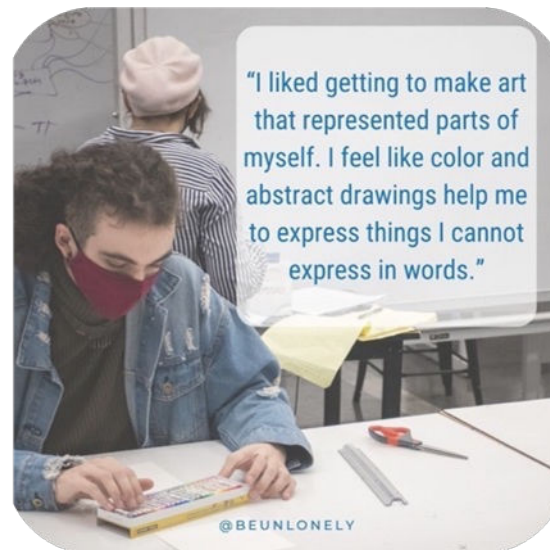


**Have
conversations**

What People Are Saying...

Colors and Connection workshops have taken place in partnership with:

- School of The Art Institute of Chicago
- Cooper Union
- University of New England
- Harvard Undergraduate College
- Harvard School of Public Health
- Emerson College
- Colby College



*"Pausing to think about the whole world of emotional possibility that exists when you're expressing yourself with color or with art, and **challenging yourself to think differently**, gives you a new perspective."*

-Ashley, Harvard School of Public Health C&C participant

UnLonely Film Festival: Harnessing the power of short film

- Each year 30+ films are selected and available to the public for free on our website for a full year or “season”
- The films all center around the complexities of loneliness from diverse perspectives and lived experiences
- UnLonely films can be easily viewed in a variety of settings by students, staff, or faculty- leading to meaningful conversations
- Film viewing leads to follow-on programs, building community and belonging
- Used at SAIC, Cooper Union, Harvard, among others



**Co-host &
Judge:
Mike Paseornek**

*Independent Film
Producer; Former
President of Production,
Lionsgate Motion Picture
Group*



**Co-host:
Michelle Williams**

*Dean, Harvard
T. H. Chan School of
Public Health*

*Project UnLonely
Champion*



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3

Harnessing the arts in service to others

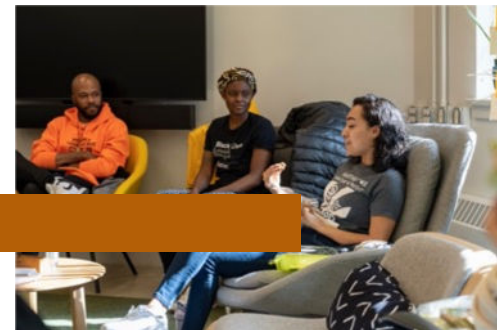


COOK/BOOK

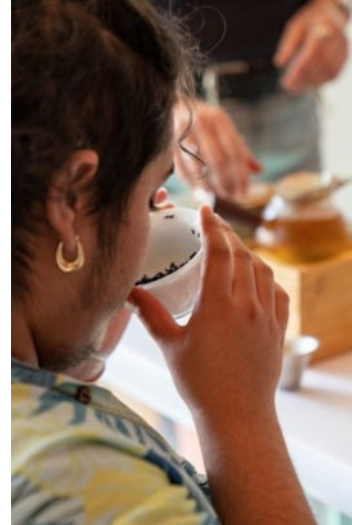
Building community & belonging through food



A Project UnLonely / SAIC Collaborative Art-making Grant project



Part 1 | **Belonging and Community Food Panel Discussion**



Part 2 | **Taste-buds & collaging connections through sensory play workshop**



Part 3 | **Kitchen Table Stories bookmaking workshop**

Thank you!

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Made For Kids: Community-Based Experiential Learning Otis College of Art and Design

Presenters: Student Nyke Shen | Faculty Joseph Brandon Thomas



Mission Statements

Creative Action/ Integrated Learning (CAIL)

- Introduces students to compelling social and environmental issues through collaborations with community partners
 - > Builds community among students through multidisciplinary practice
 - > Field based experiential learning with community partners builds new connection

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- Champions and engages creative arts expression as a path towards improved health and wellbeing for individuals and communities
 - > Recognizes the value of building projects based on community connections encourages students to feel a part of something important which can reduce loneliness

Case Study: Sole Folks Grocery Store & Community Garden

Community Partner: Sole Folks Organization

Location: Leimert Park, Los Angeles, 8 miles from Otis College

Mission Statement: Sole Folks is a retail incubator program for young designers and artisans from underserved communities. Their mission is to create a space where minority businesses can learn about bringing their products to market.



Leimert Park Site Visit: Grocery Store Project



Problem: Gentrifying neighborhood, many blue collar established residents with lower incomes

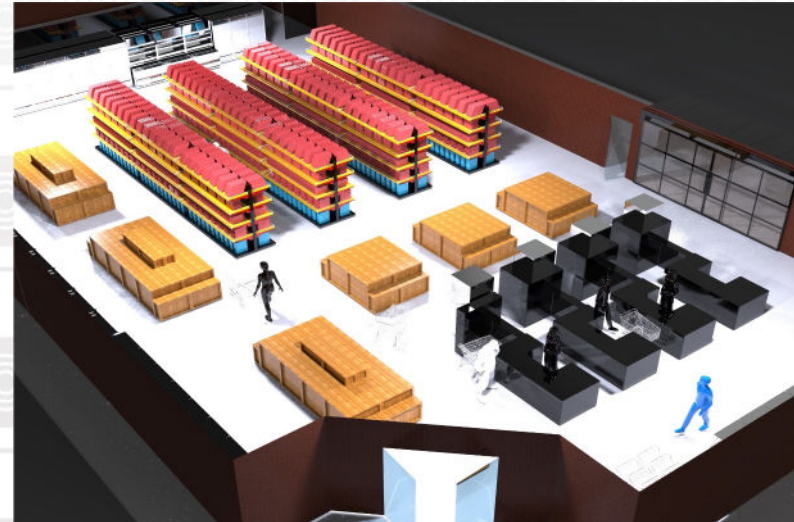
- > Limited food access options for people without transportation

- > Residents experience more diet related health problems

New Grocery Store Concept

Captures:

History of the community as an influential hub for artists and musicians whose contributions transformed U.S. perspectives on race and ethnicity.



Overview of Site Layout with Cafe and Community Garden



Final Thoughts: Learning Professionalism through Community Engagement

- Art classes should teach more than skills training.
- Art and design aren't simply about a task well done. Using our skills to influence social justice outcomes is vital.
- Transitioning from college to work is intimidating. Gaining experience through class projects helps!

The Unlonely Project wants us to think about student success. Is it just about skill, or is it also about helping students connect to a larger world?

Thank You!
Questions?

The Design Team

Nyke Shen [Fine Art]

Project Manager, Concept Lead

Sua Kim [Fine Art]

Concept, Draftsperson

Nathan Mai [Product Design]

Concept, Designer

Christian Contreras [Animation]

Draftsperson

Rose Ghazarian [Graphic Design & Illustration]

Draftsperson

Inspiring vision!

Schools of art and design lead the way for all colleges and universities in fostering connection and belonging.



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Expanded collaboration between AICAD and FAH



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AICAD Arts & Wellbeing Fund

- ▶ Mini grants of \$2500-\$5000 to promote wellbeing through creative engagement
 - Implementation funds to utilize the Foundation for Art & Healing's "Colors & Connection" framework with students, faculty, staff and/or local community groups
 - Support funds for existing or new on campus wellness programs that promote the connection between creative practice and connection to others
 - Documentation funds for existing projects by students, faculty, alumni or other community members to utilize their creative skills in engaging others in wellness-based activities



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Thank You!

What you can do next:

- Help your students be more “UnLonely”!

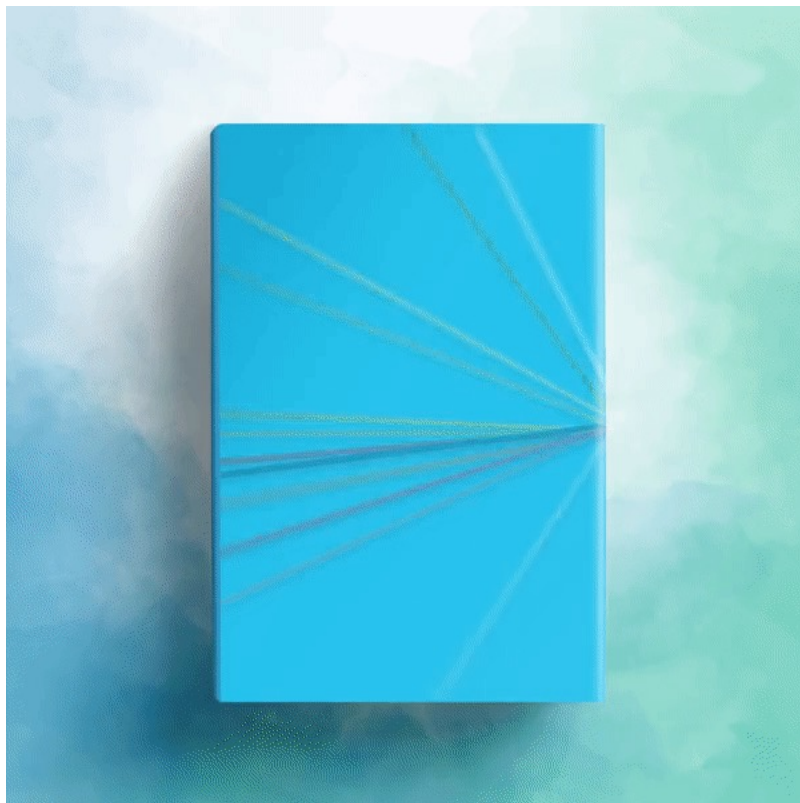
Reach out here for more on Campus Colors and Connection: www.artandhealing.org/colors-connection

- **Watch videos** from the UnLonely Film Festival at www.artandhealing.org



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Design Your Own Project UnLonely!

Pre-order now on
Amazon, Barnes & Noble,
Bookshop, and Google Play



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Wild Geese

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
*Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.*

Mary Oliver



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Thank You!

Jeremy Nobel, MD, MPH
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