

THE THERAPY WORLD BLOG

Therapists: Social Isolation is Destroying Us

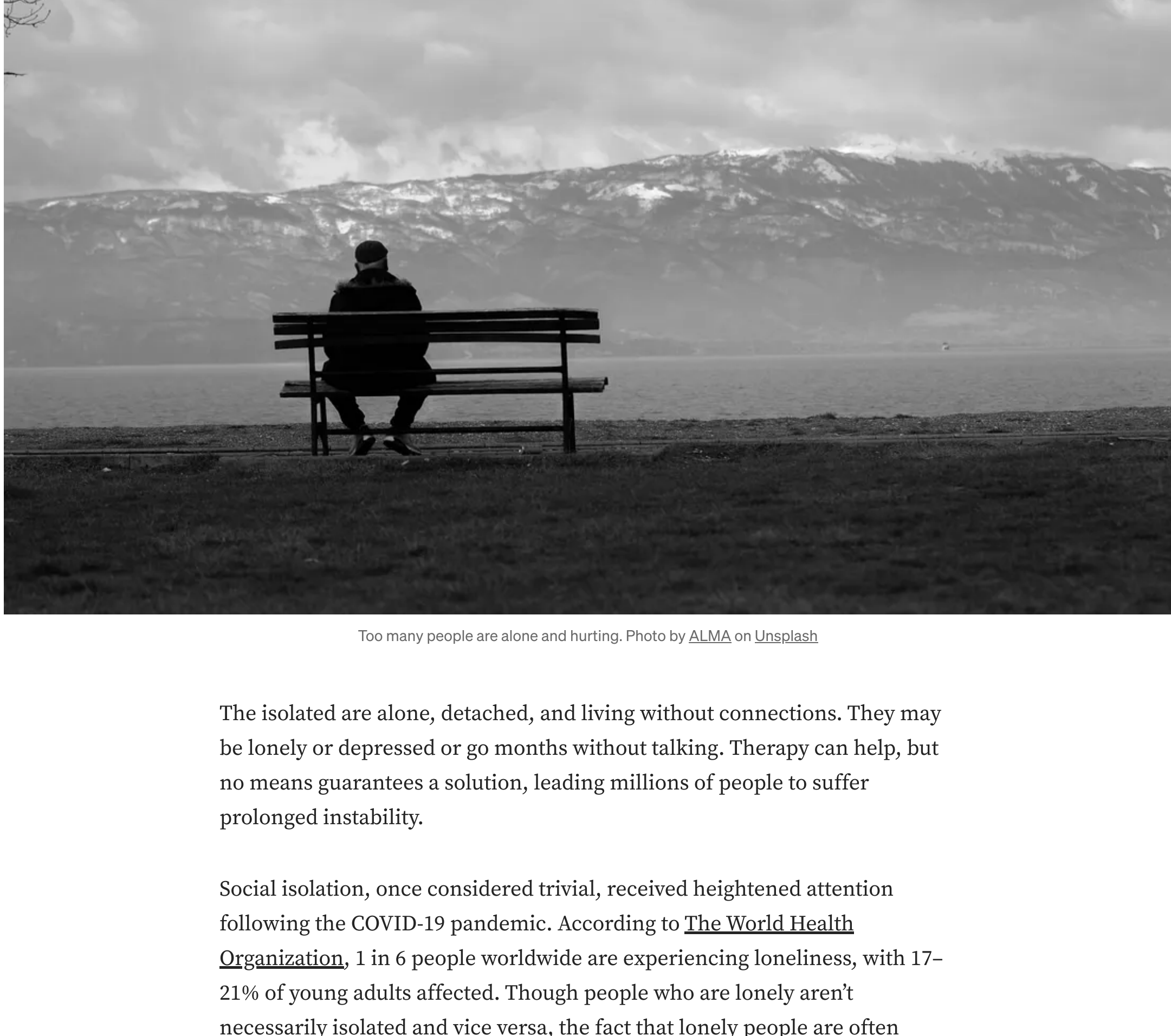
The problem isn't easy to treat.

 Kevin Brown

Follow

4 min read · Jul 9, 2025



Too many people are alone and hurting. Photo by [ALMA](#) on [Unsplash](#)

The isolated are alone, detached, and living without connections. They may be lonely or depressed or go months without talking. Therapy can help, but no means guarantees a solution, leading millions of people to suffer prolonged instability.

Social isolation, once considered trivial, received heightened attention following the COVID-19 pandemic. According to [The World Health Organization](#), 1 in 6 people worldwide are experiencing loneliness, with 17–21% of young adults affected. Though people who are lonely aren't necessarily isolated and vice versa, the fact that lonely people are often isolated can't be ignored.

Social isolation is now a deadly epidemic, one requiring therapists' attention. Traumatic experiences play a role, causing depression and anger that create barriers to communication. Without intervention, the isolation leads to prolonged instability, indicating a need for an immediate reaction by therapists and their organizations.

What is social isolation?

Social isolation refers to the state of having little to no social contact or support. It's different than loneliness which refers to the subjective feeling of being alone or disconnected. People who are socially isolated may not even feel lonely but still have no one to turn to for support or interaction.

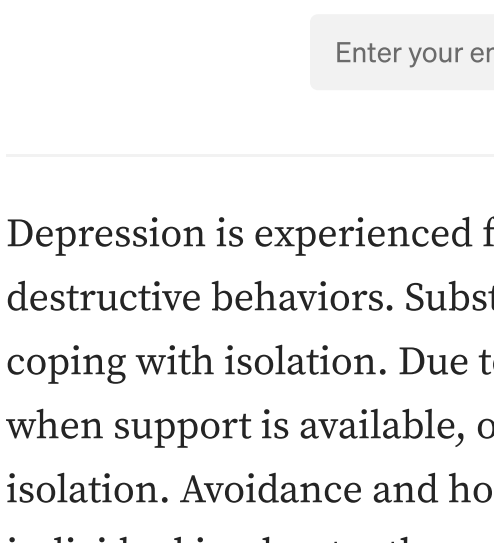
The isolated rarely appear that way — you couldn't tell by looking at them. When seen, they are without friends or companionship. They appear to go through life alone without assistance. They may spend extended periods at home, going many weeks or months without contact. They may be older adults, homeless, have mental health issues, or be inhabitants of rural areas.

Social isolation can worsen or cause depression. It may cause intense feelings of loneliness or lead to physical decline.

Social isolation can also cause cognitive issues, as lack of interaction has a negative impact on how the brain works.

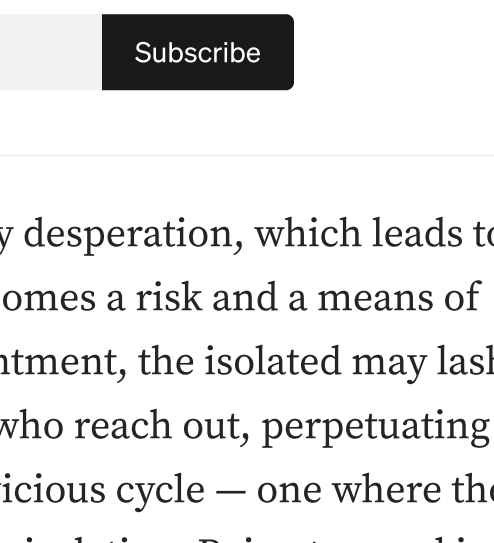
Finally, social isolation and loneliness create an increased risk for premature death — a 29% and 26% increase, respectively, according to a [meta-analytic review](#).

Social isolation



29% increase in premature death

Loneliness



26% increase in premature death

 www.kevinbwriting.com

A deadly cycle

The socially isolated start off at a point where they can easily be helped, but after many months or years, the effects become devastating. What begins as a lack of support leads to long-term psychological issues as the detachment continues.

Get Kevin Brown's stories in your inbox

Join Medium for free to get updates from this writer.

Enter your email

Subscribe

Depression is experienced first, followed by desperation, which leads to self-destructive behaviors. Substance abuse becomes a risk and a means of coping with isolation. Due to anger or resentment, the isolated may lash out when support is available, or avoid people who reach out, perpetuating their isolation. Avoidance and hostility create a vicious cycle — one where the individual inadvertently contributes to their isolation. Being trapped in this cycle may lead to suicidal thoughts. The problem, clearly, is dangerous.

Therapy isn't helping

Therapy presents an opportunity for people to change in ways that would end their social isolation. For example, a therapist may help a client improve their self-esteem or learn to put themselves in situations where there are more people.

But some clients have circumstances that render treatment ineffective, such as when they're widely disliked or unpopular or being targeted by the community. In these cases, therapy may not change anything for the better. The client's only hope is to relocate and make connections elsewhere.

Therapy clients are desperate to let their therapists know about the pain they're feeling in social isolation. The pain the isolated feel is detrimental to their life and contributes to a desire to give up completely.

Therapists need to understand the hidden dangers of social isolation that aren't reported or widely expressed in therapy. Therapy clients are likely to feel desperate in ways their therapist can't understand. They may be willing to take extreme risks that jeopardize their well-being, anything to escape the isolation.

What therapists can do

Therapists can do more to help their socially isolated clients. Therapy may be the only remaining hope, as people who are isolated have no meaningful relationships and may even have people working against them.

Helping a person who is socially isolated may lead to significant transformation, long-term growth, and improved mood and well-being. Therapists can consider any of the following suggestions:

- Help clients brainstorm activities to do around other people
- Help clients develop strategies for improving social skills
- Help clients reduce anxiety surrounding public transportation or rideshare options
- Help clients explore ways to strengthen or rebuild past relationships
- Direct clients to approved resources for reducing or coping with loneliness

Despite the benefits, challenges remain. The person in therapy may struggle with low self-esteem, which makes finding social connections more of a challenge. Here, a guided approach becomes essential. The isolated person will need structure to overcome the problem.

A growing epidemic

Social isolation is a far worse problem than the public believes. The isolated are trapped with a lower quality of life and face increased health risks that people who are not isolated don't worry about.

Therapists can help people address the underlying causes of isolation and take a major step in tackling a problem that is tearing apart the core of society. Once progress is made, the improvements become evident. No one in a community will be truly alone.

Kevin Brown is a mental health writer and the editor of [The Therapy World Blog](#).

Loneliness

Therapy

Society

Mental Health Awareness

Mental Health Disorders

 **Written by Kevin Brown**

50 followers · 69 following

Follow

Experienced freelance mental health writer. Nonfiction/fiction ghostwriter. Human work-in-progress and soon-to-be published author.

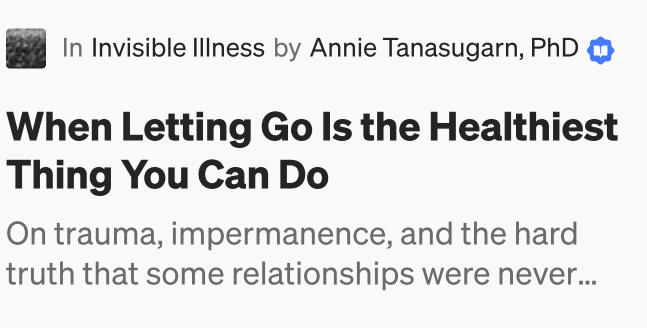
No responses yet



 Write a response

What are your thoughts?

More from Kevin Brown

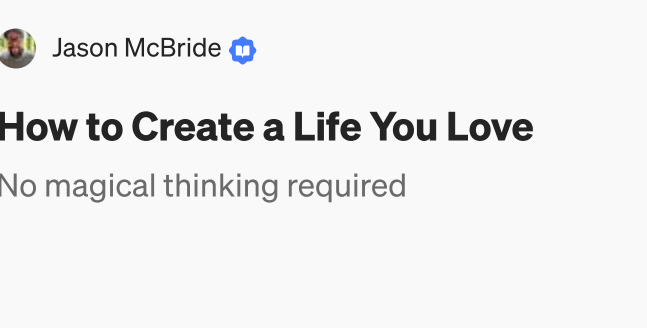


Kevin Brown

What to Do if You're Still Depressed After 30 Years

There is hope for stability with less common treatments.

Dec 27, 2025 · 17

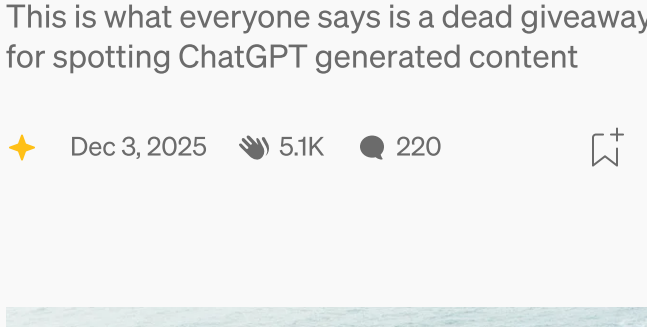


Kevin Brown

The Top 10 Online Anger Management Resources, Ranked

To help you if your anger is out of control.

Aug 21, 2025

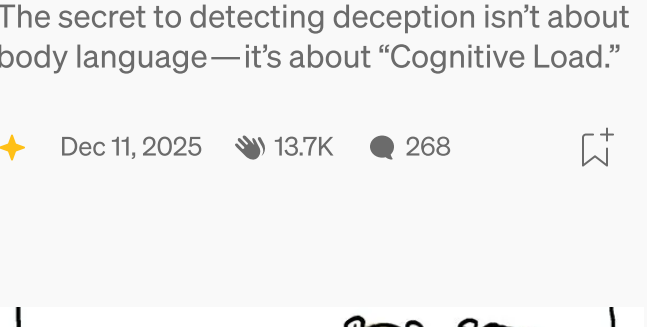


Kevin Brown

Remembering Dr. Maxie Clarence Maultsby Jr., Founder of Rational...

The great psychiatrist created a self-counseling approach that would change ho...

Feb 2, 2025 · 1



Kevin Brown

Can Family Therapy Help Teens Forgive and Let Go?

Why it's necessary and how a therapist helps.

Jul 3, 2025

See all from Kevin Brown

Recommended from Medium



In Invisible Illness by Annie Tanasugarn, PhD

When Letting Go Is the Healthiest Thing You Can Do

On trauma, impermanence, and the hard truth that some relationships were never...

Aug 15, 2025 · 4.2K · 109



Jason McBride

How to Create a Life You Love

No magical thinking required

Jul 28, 2025 · 21K · 879



In Entrepreneurship Handbook by Joe Procopio

5 Obvious Ways Everyone Knows You're Using ChatGPT

This is what everyone says is a dead giveaway for spotting ChatGPT generated content

Dec 3, 2025 · 5.1K · 220



In E! — Entertain Enlighten Emp... by Joshua Mas...

How to Spot a Liar in 3 Questions (Without Them Knowing)

The secret to detecting deception isn't about body language—it's about "Cognitive Load."

Dec 11, 2025 · 13.7K · 268



In Thought Thinkers by Milena Babic

I Wanted to Be So Many Things

On identity, change, and taking a different path

Aug 15, 2025 · 5.7K · 249



In MuddyUm by David Milgrim

The Love I Haven't Felt

But hope to soon

Sep 22, 2025 · 5.2K · 127

See more recommendations