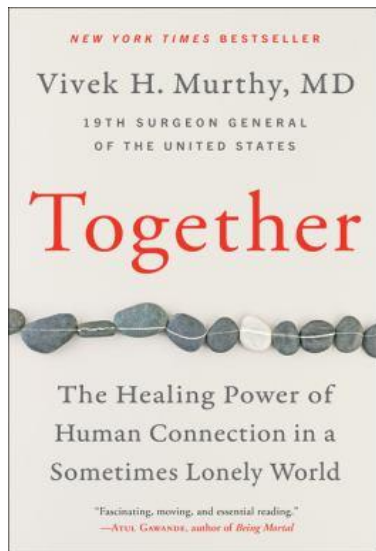


Mayors Wellness Campaign

Together:

The Healing Power of Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World by Vivek Murthy



“A (former) U.S. Surgeon General makes the surprising case that an epidemic of loneliness is among the gravest health crises currently facing the country. Human connection is “our evolutionary birthright,” yet the American culture of individualism and self-sufficiency has created a nation of individuals suffering from isolation, even as technology makes it easier than ever to stay in contact with our loved ones. While social media creates the impression that everyone else is popular and happy, a decline in shared public spaces chips away at robust communities and networks of support. Together resists the temptation to romanticize the past, recognizing that many close-knit communities can be suffocating to people who don't conform to a

narrow, limiting set of ideals. Drawing from real-life initiatives across the world, Murthy offers a road map to a future that is less stifling than a purely collectivist culture and less isolating than an individualistic one, in which kindness and care for others become the reigning principles of American society. This book is a welcome tonic for an increasingly divided country.” (Booklist)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Vivek H. Murthy served as the 19th and 21st Surgeon General of the United States under Presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden. While serving as 21st Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy is focused on drawing attention to and working across government to address a number of critical public health issues, including the growing proliferation of health misinformation, the ongoing youth mental health crisis, well-being and burnout in the health worker community, and social isolation and loneliness. Additionally, he serves as a key advisor to President Biden's COVID-19 pandemic response operation.

Dr. Murthy received his bachelor's degree from Harvard and his M.D. and M.B.A. degrees from Yale. He completed his internal medicine residency at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston and later joined Harvard Medical School as faculty in internal medicine. His research focused on vaccine development and later on the participation of women and minorities in clinical trials.

Listen

Vivek Murthy: The Loneliness Epidemic, Everything Happens podcast by Kate Bowler

In “Together,” Former Surgeon General Talks About Importance of Human Connection” -NPR

Watch

Aspen Ideas: Health 20/20 Book Talk

Read

How Loneliness Hurts Us and What to Do About It by Jill Suttie, Greater Good Magazine, 5/14/20

“Together” Review: All the Lonely People, Matt Rees, WSJ 5/25/20

Kirkus Review 1/26/20

Review: Loneliness a hidden and serious health scourge, Vivek Murthy argues in a timely book - Matt McCarthy, USA Today, 4/26/20

Discussion Questions*

1. Some of Dr. Murthy’s patients have shared that they don’t have anyone who they can authentically talk to or feel seen by in their life. As one of Dr. Murthy’s friends put it, “To be loved is not enough. You have to both be loved and to be known.” Do you feel known?

2. Loneliness is both common and consequential. It’s an epidemic that, according to surveys, affects around 20% of adults in the United States and impacts our health outcomes, work engagement, and school performance.

Does this number surprise you? Does this number compel you?

3. There are a number of reasons why loneliness—which has always been a struggle—is so ubiquitous now. We’re more mobile, for starters. And we also have more technology that can dilute or substitute higher-quality interactions. To what do you attribute the loneliness epidemic? How has mobility, technology, or something else impacted your ability to make durable connections?

4. What cultural stigmas have you noticed around the topic of loneliness? How do you think your race, gender, or age has affected your ability to talk truthfully about it?

5. Dr. Murthy’s physical therapist once said to him, “Strength is the padding that you need in life. It makes you less susceptible to injury.” What’s one relationship in your life right now that gives you strength? How has it been a cushion against pain? How can you be a cushion for someone else?

6. The great irony is that the thing that affords us the greatest ability to connect—our fragility—is the thing we’re most afraid to share. What’s something small that helps you overcome this fear when you’re struggling to connect?

7. To address the loneliness epidemic, Dr. Murthy says we will have to ask deeper questions about life, its purpose, and our obligation to one another. What question do you think is part of the solution?

*Questions adapted from katebowler.com