Three Wise Kangaroos

The loneliness pandemic

Lead-in

1. What kind of activities do you like doing on your own?
   What do you like doing with other people?
   Think about things like shopping, going for a walk, going to the cinema, etc.
2. Do you feel connected to your family and friends?
   Would you say nowadays people are less connected to their family and friends than they used to be? If so, why?

Video

Watch the video and answer the questions.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JxbYPk1MIyw

1. What is loneliness?
2. How is being lonely different from being isolated?
3. How many people feel lonely in today's society?
4. Which age group is the loneliest?
5. Which factors are responsible for the loneliness epidemic?
6. What's the connection between loneliness and smoking?
7. What does research show about people who are lonely in later life?
8. What's the best way to keep on the path of wellbeing?
9. What advice does the professor give if you're feeling lonely?

Over to you

1. Did you find any of the information presented in the video surprising?
2. What do you make of the fact that the loneliest age group are young adults between 16-24 who are perversely the ones with the biggest friend networks on social media?
3. Do you think social dislocation- living away from your family and friends- or screens are more responsible for the loneliness crisis?
4. How would you compare your generation and your parents' or grandparents' generation when it comes to ...?
   - going out
   - joining clubs
   - inviting people over
   - visiting houses of worship
5. If loneliness is as dangerous as smoking half a pack of cigarettes a day, shouldn't this problem be given more attention? What would be the best way to raise awareness about this issue?
6. In your culture, is it the done thing to have small talk with strangers e.g. a check out assistant or a delivery person? Do you feel comfortable doing that?

7. Do you feel there are enough places such as community centres in your town/ city for people to meet up and socialise?

8. In today's society most of us have access to numerous channels of communication and can at any given time call, text, message or facetime others. However, more people than ever before report feeling lonely. Does this mean we attach less value to messages communicated electronically?

Vocabulary

Look at some extracts from the video and pay attention to the words in bold. Can you work out their meaning from the context?

a) Loneliness is **pervasive** across the world.

b) Loneliness was on the rise from at least the 1950s, in part because of **social dislocation**.

c) There was **a decline** in investing in our communities.

d) All of that **contributed to** our increasing disconnection.

e) People with strong social **bonds** are less likely to die than people without strong social bonds.

f) People who are lonely in later life have more **rapid** brain decline.

g) These casual **encounters** we make every day help us feel more connected.

Now match the words with their meaning.

pervasive	lack of attachment, belonging or identity
social dislocation	fast
a decline	a relationship between people or groups based on shared feelings, interests, or experiences
to contribute to	spreading widely throughout an area or a group of people (especially of an unwelcome influence or physical effect)
a bond	an unexpected or casual meeting with sb
rapid	to play a part in, to add to
an encounter	a decrease

Vocabulary activation

Talk about:

| An encounter with a stranger you really enjoyed. | Someone you have a strong bond with. | A worrying phenomenon that is pervasive in society nowadays. |
| A lifestyle trend that has seen rapid growth in recent months. | A common pastime that is in decline nowadays. | Factors that contribute to healthy wellbeing. |

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Challenge

You are a member of a panel of experts who are currently working on the best solutions to tackle social disconnectedness. Here are a few ideas that have been put forward. Discuss the pros and cons of each one and add your own suggestions.

Mobile phone ban

To ban the use of mobile phones in public places such as shops, schools or on public transport to encourage more face-to-face interaction.

Revival of community centres

To open more community centres for people to be able to meet up, organise events and connect with other like-minded people.

Cognitive behavioural therapy

To make elements of cognitive behavioural therapy part of the school curriculum in order to teach young people how to make meaningful social connections in their life.

Community service

To make community service part of compulsory secondary school education in order for young people to get into the community, help out and interact with others in real life. The places could include care homes, orphanages and homeless people's shelters.