

Psychological factors that contribute to loneliness and how to address them

AUSTRALIAN COALITION TO
END LONELINESS

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Ending Loneliness

The Australian Coalition to End Loneliness is a collaboration of organisations and community groups working together to build an evidence-based approach to ending loneliness in Australia.

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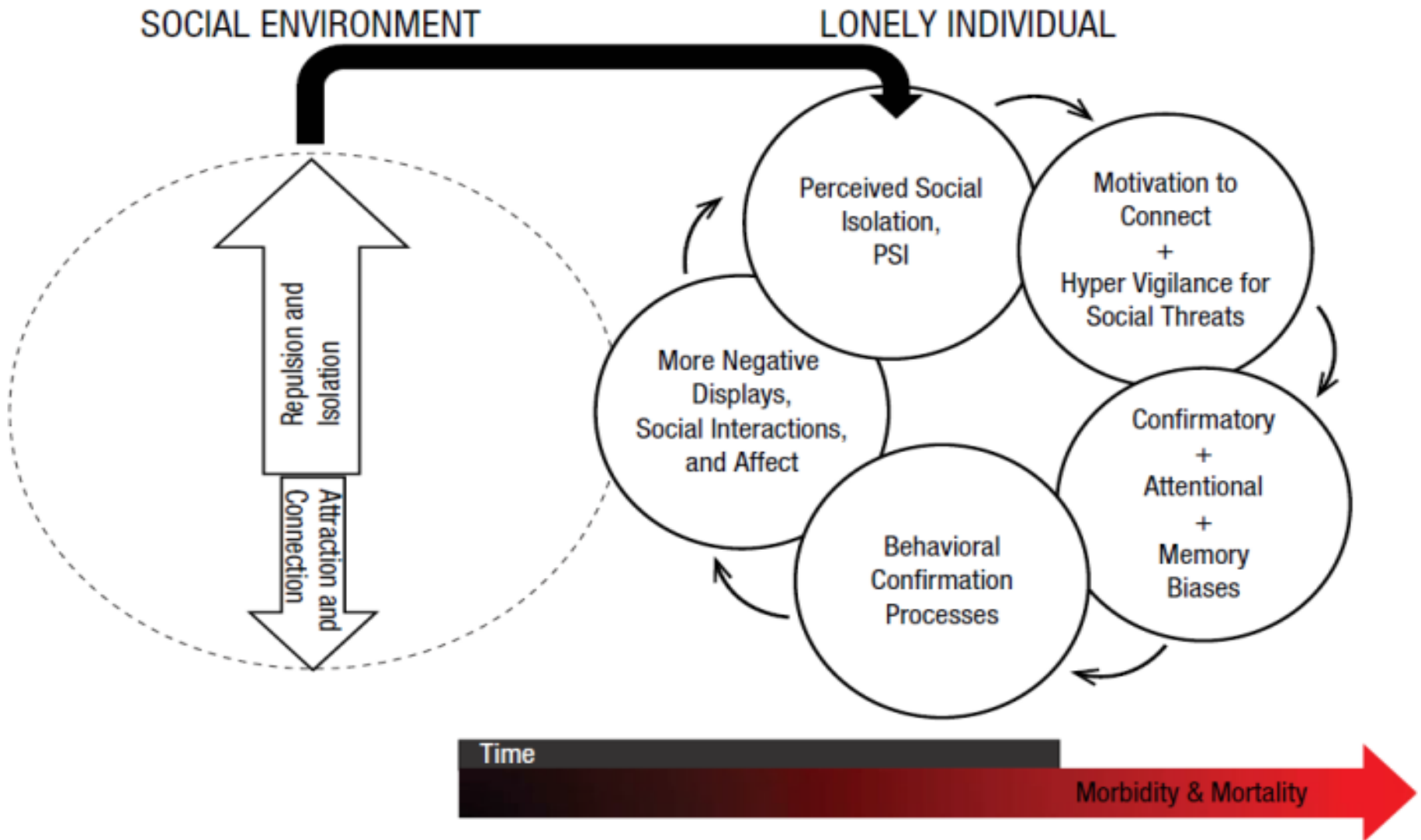
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Loneliness Model



The effects of loneliness on social cognition - Cacioppo et al. (2015)

Loneliness & Depression

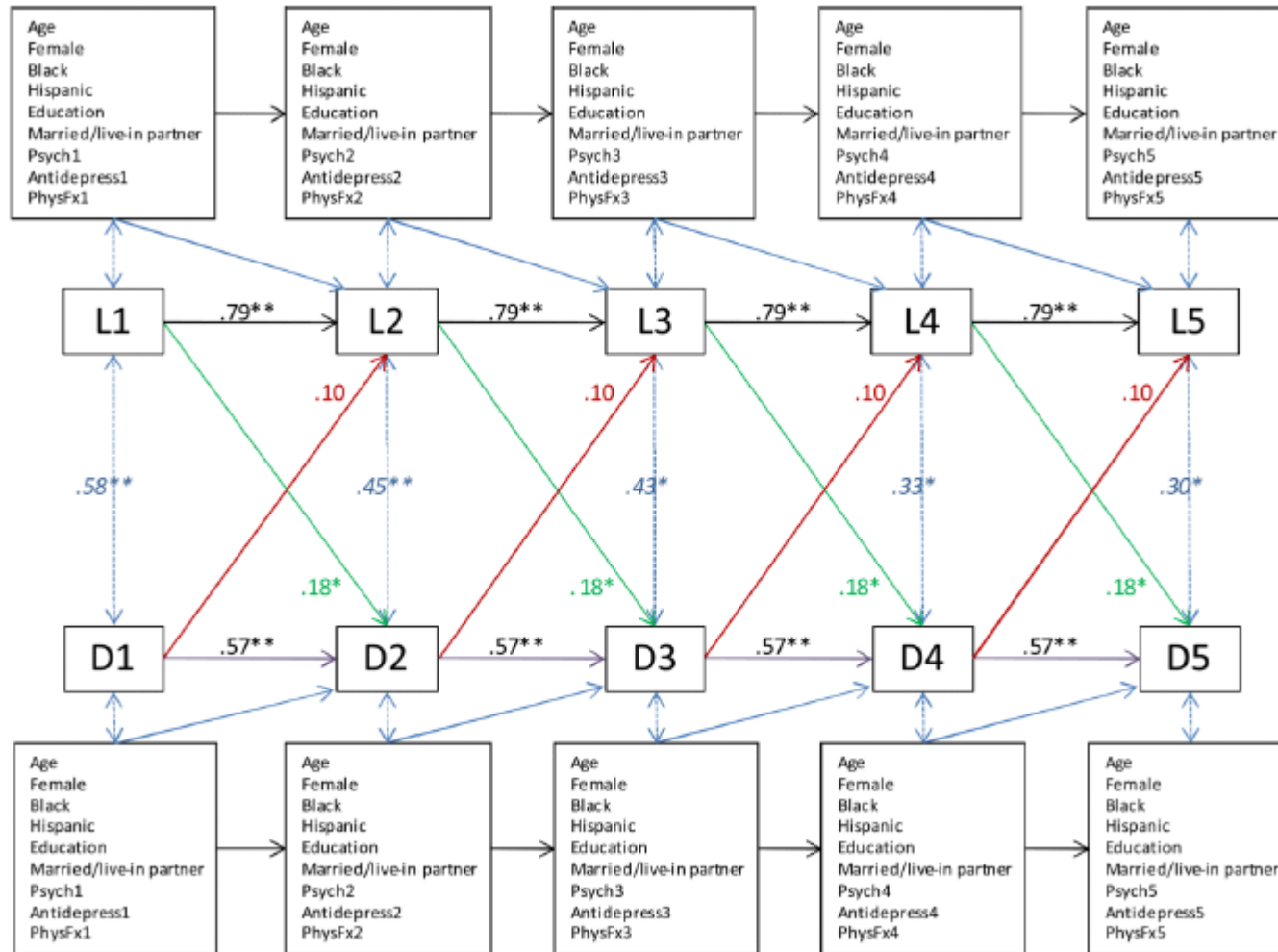


Figure 1. Cross-lagged panel model showing that loneliness predicts increases in depressive symptoms independent of covariates. Adapted from “Perceived Social Isolation Makes Me sad: 5-year Cross-lagged Analyses of Loneliness and Depressive Symptomatology in the Chicago Health, Aging, and Social Relations Study” by J.T Cacioppo, L.C Hawkey & R.A. Thisted, 2010, *Psychological Aging*, 25, p. 18.

Loneliness & Psychological Health

- Over 1010 people (18-85 years) across 3 time points over 6 months
- Loneliness at an earlier time:
 - Depression at a later time
 - Paranoia at a later time
 - Social anxiety at a later time
- Social anxiety predicts loneliness

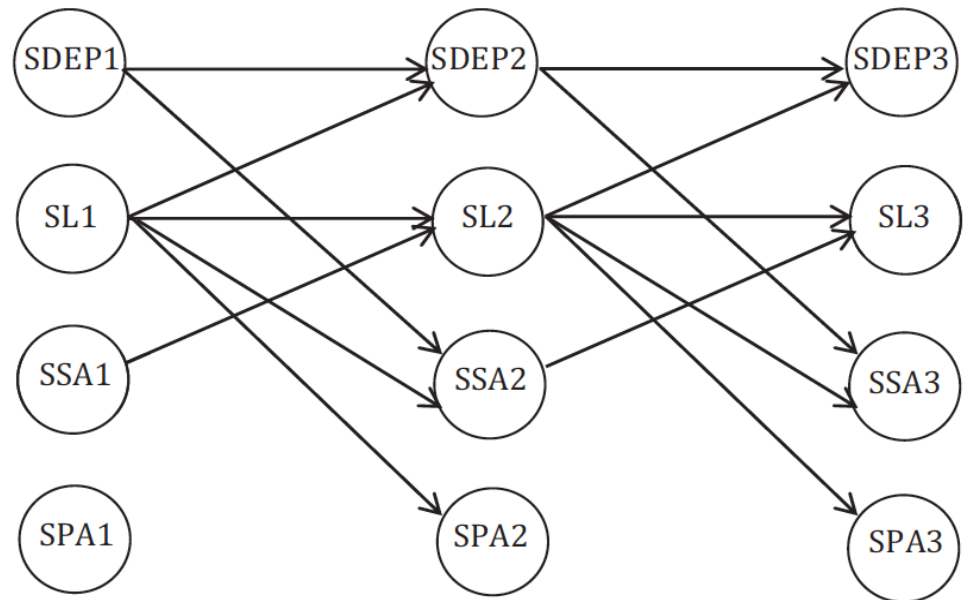


Figure 2. Significant autoregressive and cross-lagged pathways depicting the relationship among four variables—loneliness, social anxiety, depression, and paranoia—over three time points. Trait variables were omitted for clarity. Refer to Table 2 for estimates. SL = state loneliness, SSA = state social anxiety, SDEP = state depression, SPA = state paranoia. Specific time points are indicated by numbers after SL, SSA, SDEP, and SPA: 1 = Time 1, 2 = Time 2, 3 = Time 3.

Targeted solutions



Individual



Relationships



Community



Societal

Therapeutic approaches

- Cognitive-behavioural approach
 - Changing how one views the world
 - Addressing negative beliefs formed about others
- Strengths-based approach
 - Hope, agency, sense of personal control, human capacity
 - Focus on interpersonal relationships
 - Gratitude, active constructive responses
 - Signal positive emotions and body language
 - Kindness

Strengths-based approach

ORIGINAL PAPER



A pilot digital intervention targeting loneliness in young people with psychosis

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Abstract

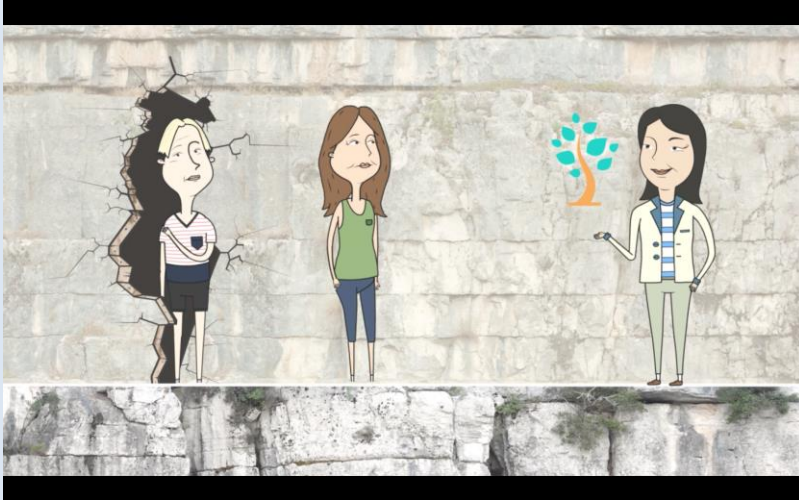
Purpose Loneliness has been identified as a significant challenge for people with psychosis. Interventions targeting loneliness are lacking but adopting a positive psychology approach may reduce loneliness, promote well-being, and support meaningful social interactions. Together with youth mental health consumers, we developed a digital smartphone application (app) called +Connect, which delivers positive psychology content daily for 6 weeks. **Materials and methods** Twelve participants diagnosed with a psychotic disorder were recruited from early psychosis services. Loneliness was assessed pre-intervention, post-intervention, and 3-month post-intervention. Acceptability, feasibility, and usability were measured post-intervention, including a semi-structured interview on the user's experience of +Connect. **Results** We found evidence for the feasibility of +Connect. All but two participants completed the +Connect program, completing 95% (40.10 out of 42 days) of the program. Furthermore, 66.67% (8 out of the 12 participants) remained engaged with the program 3-months post-intervention. Our data indicates preliminary evidence that +Connect may reduce loneliness, with scores from pre-intervention ($M = 50.00$, $SD = 8.47$) to post-intervention ($M = 48.10$, $SD = 10.38$) and 3-months post-intervention ($M = 42.89$, $SD = 7.04$). We found that positive reinforcement of in-game rewards and evidence of positive mood changes added to the feasibility of the app. Regarding acceptability, while 10% (1/10 participants) reported not finding +Connect useful or enjoyable, 90% of participants agreed that +Connect helped them to increase their social confidence, enjoy life, look forward to being with other people, and feel more connected with others. Participant interviews supported these results, with participants highlighting the app's strengths in providing useful information, stimulating self-reflection, fostering positive affect, and encouraging transfer of skills into their social interactions. **Discussion** While preliminary findings indicated that +Connect yielded high levels of acceptability and feasibility, it is important to consider that we recruited a small and selected sample of lonely young people. Further iterations of this proof of concept app, which can incorporate participant feedback such preferences for increased personalisation, in-app feedback, and gamification, may allow an opportunity to test an improved version in the future.

Keywords Loneliness · Psychosis · Positive psychology intervention · Digital intervention

Strengths-based approach

- Focuses on strengths not deficits.
 - Flourish and thrive, wellbeing
 - Broaden and build theory (Fredrickson)
- More engaging for young people
 - lower attrition
- Interpersonal focus on building closeness
 - Showing gratitude, active constructive responses, Focus on increasing positive affect or learning to signal positive body language, showing kindness

Peer Tree



About Peer Tree



Gratitude Shared Experience



Gratitude Actor Video



What is Loneliness?

What should we consider?

**STRENGTHENING
CURRENT
RELATIONSHIPS**

CHRONICITY

**IDENTIFY &
ADDRESS SOCIAL
ANXIETY**

**SPECIFIC &
CONTEXT
GROUPS AND
INDIVIDUAL**

**INCREASE
POSITIVE
EMOTIONS**

**INCREASE SAFE
SOCIAL
OPPORTUNITIES**

**PROMOTE
BEHAVIOURS
THAT BUILD
INTIMACY**



Questions

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