

Coffee Catch Up Takeover - Stigma and Prejudice around Loneliness – scientific evidence, practical insights, and how to move forward

Quick recap

The meeting focused on preparing for an upcoming webinar about loneliness, with discussions on technical setup and participant engagement.

The webinar, hosted by Aba Amihyia, Community Manager for The Tackling Loneliness Hub and featuring presenters Dr Alma-Sophia Merscher and Lea Merkel, explored the intersection of prejudice, stigma, and loneliness through personal experiences and research findings. The session concluded with discussions on ageism and loneliness, including breakout room activities and potential strategies to address these issues through cross-sector collaboration.

Summary

Addressing Loneliness Through Research

The webinar, hosted by Aba Amihyia (Community Manager for The Tackling Loneliness Hub) and featuring presenters Dr Alma-Sophia Merscher and Lea Merkel, focused on the intersection of prejudice, stigma, and loneliness.

Participants shared personal experiences of loneliness, including Emma's experience of isolation due to her daughter's illness and Chris Frederik's poem about the longing for genuine human connection.

The presenters outlined their recent conference and introduced their ongoing project, which aims to bridge scientific research with practical applications to address loneliness among young adults.

The session concluded with plans to provide future engagement opportunities for participants.

Understanding Loneliness and Stigma

The meeting focused on discussing experiences and research related to loneliness, stigma, and social patterns.

Chris shared personal insights about healing anxious attachment and self-soothing techniques, while Claire mentioned her work on intimacy and stigma faced by older trans women.

Alma-Sophia highlighted the diversity of loneliness experiences and emphasized that loneliness is socially patterned, affecting marginalized groups such as those living in poverty, unemployed individuals, and racial or ethnic minorities.

The discussion also touched on the link between stigma and loneliness, with a focus on how stigmatizing perspectives can exacerbate loneliness and hinder efforts to reduce it.

Understanding Stigma and Ageism

Alma-Sophia discussed the concepts of stigma and prejudice, explaining how they often overlap and manifest at different levels, from individual self-stigma to systemic discrimination. She highlighted the link between stigma and loneliness, citing recent machine learning evidence that suggests stigma may be a significant correlate of loneliness.

Alma-Sophia also introduced the concept of ageism, defined by the World Health Organization as stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination based on age, noting its prevalence and underacknowledgment.

Addressing Ageism and Loneliness

The meeting focused on discussing ageism and loneliness, with participants exploring how ageism manifests at different levels (micro, meso, and macro) and potential strategies to challenge it.

Lea and Alma-Sophia led a breakout room activity where attendees reflected on ageist attitudes and shared examples of intergenerational projects that successfully addressed ageism.

The discussion highlighted challenges such as labor market discrimination against older workers and the need for context-specific communication strategies.

Conclusion

The conversation ended with an overview of cross-sector collaboration opportunities and the launch of a new initiative focused on loneliness among young adults.

Next steps

- Participants to join the Tackling Loneliness Hub group ['Stigma & Prejudice'](#) to continue the conversation about stigma, prejudice, and loneliness.
- Participants to complete the [60-second feedback](#) survey.
- Lea to launch the first season of the "[Loneliess](#)" video podcast in November targeting young adults.
- Lea to connect with interested participants for potential collaboration on the "Loneliess" podcast Season 2.