

What a Workplace Loneliness Expert Wants You to Know About the Emotion

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To say the global workforce is lonely would be a massive understatement.

A whopping 94 percent of global workers believe their coworkers experience loneliness at least monthly, with 79 percent saying weekly and 26 percent saying daily. Additionally, 77 percent of leaders believe individuals on their team experience loneliness at least monthly, with 60 percent saying weekly. This is according to my recent research for my workplace loneliness book. I surveyed more than 2,000 global workers and interviewed more than 50 global leaders. I also collaborated with hundreds of the world's leading organizations to understand and address workplace loneliness.

Here are the five things you need to know about workplace loneliness.

1. Loneliness is not the absence of people but the absence of connection

Someone can be in a crowded office and still experience loneliness. Conversely, a solo remote worker can be fully engaged in their work and not feel lonely. When a team member is disconnected from themselves, their team, the culture or the work itself...loneliness ensues. In order to reduce

loneliness, workers need to feel connected to the work or organization, their team and their manager.

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2. Loneliness is impacting your team

According to our research, 72 percent of global workers said they experience loneliness monthly, with 55 percent saying weekly. 94 percent of leaders say that their teams are growing lonelier while working remotely. It's not a matter of if your team is experiencing loneliness but how many are experiencing the negative impacts of loneliness. Our research also shows that loneliness shows up across all levels within an organization. It is not just lonely at the top. It's lonely in the middle and the bottom.

3. Loneliness is hindering worker performance

Lonely workers are seven times less likely to be engaged at work. They are five times more likely to miss work due to stress or illness. And, twice as often to think about leaving their employer. Loneliness is an unaddressed productivity killer that is incapacitating many teams. Loneliness lies at the intersection of inclusion and well-being. Decreasing workplace loneliness boosts workers' health, engagement, performance and loyalty.

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4. Loneliness isn't shameful; it's

a signal

The same complex homeostatic system in our brains that drives us to eat and drink is similar to what drives us to connect and converse. Just like hunger informs us it's time to eat, feeling lonely is our biological cue to seek connection. It's a signal that we belong together. It's a universal human condition. And one of the most fertile places to foster more connection and belonging is at the place where we spend most of our waking hours, work.

5. Loneliness can be easily reduced when you know what to do

Loneliness is increasing. But that means it's malleable. What increases can also decrease. Research proves that simple pro-social behaviors can reduce loneliness. Befriending just one person at work or a positive 40 second interaction. Spending five minutes before a virtual meeting to share something personal. These are just a few examples of how swiftly loneliness can be lessened. Loneliness is being seen through, belonging is being seen as. Creating environments where people feel seen and heard is the nemesis of loneliness.

If we don't take the necessary action to combat loneliness, humanity's collective connectability will become dormant, stripping humanity of its very essence. All of us have the power to awaken the renewed sense of connection that humanity is silently screaming for.

Creating a more connectable workplace is within reach.

Let's seize it together.

Related: How to Lessen Loneliness and Boost Belonging at Work

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