



PROGRAM MATERIALS
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The Loneliness Epidemic in the Legal Profession

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The Loneliness Epidemic in the Legal Profession

Understanding Isolation, Prevention, and Support in Legal Practice

Marlo Lyons

J.D., Executive, Career, and Team Coach



Learning objectives

1. Recognize risk factors for loneliness and isolation in the legal profession
2. Understand the neurobiology of loneliness
3. Identify links between loneliness and substance misuse
4. Comprehend how to prevent loneliness in the workplace
5. Understand confidential sources for help and interventions

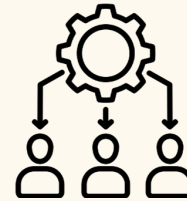
A little about me



Journalist



Entertainment
Lawyer



HR Executive

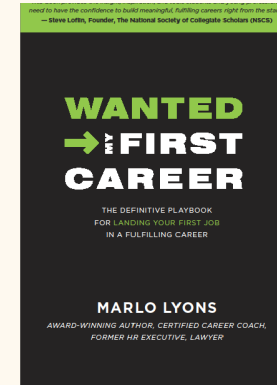
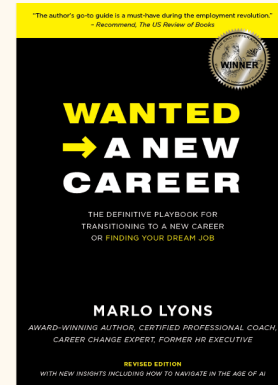
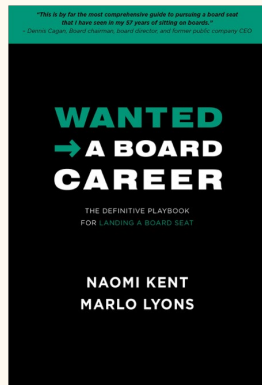


Certified Executive,
Career, and
Team Coach
Workshop Facilitator

A little more about me



Podcast
Work Unscripted



HBR Contributor

Ask yourself

Where have I seen this in my own work?



Where might there be a small opening to address it?



Why care about loneliness?

871K

People die
from loneliness
each year

1 in 6

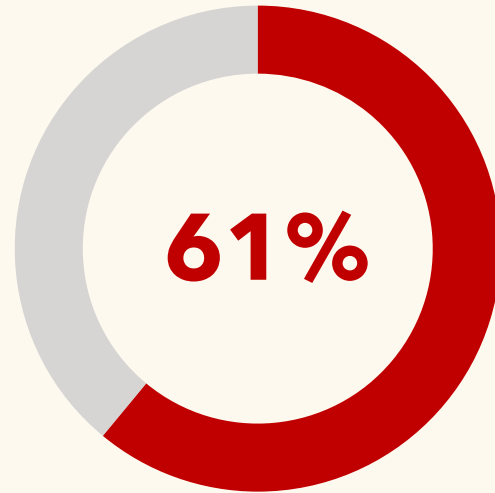
People die
are affected by
loneliness

100/hr

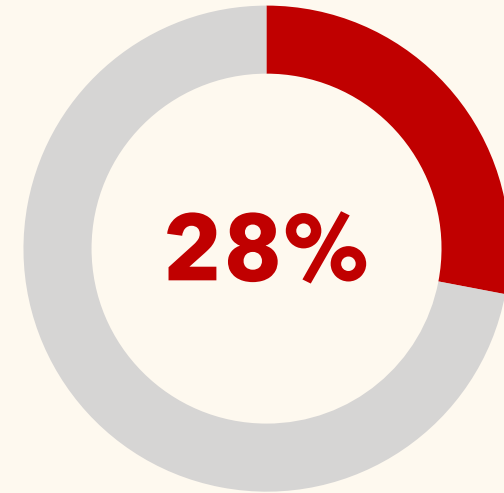
People die
of loneliness-
related causes

Lawyers and loneliness

Physical, psychological, and emotional



of lawyers feel lonely
at least once a week



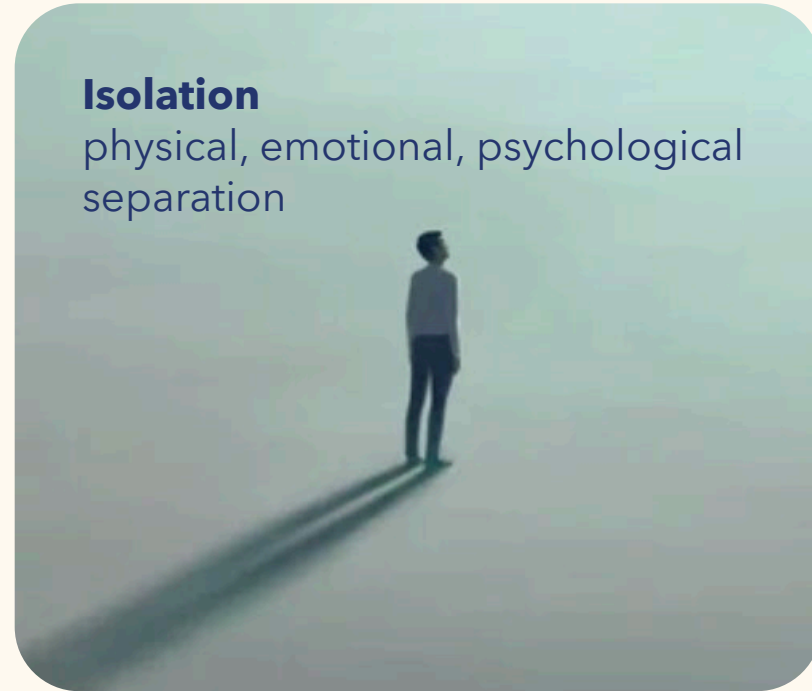
of lawyers feel lonely
most or all of the time

Defining loneliness in legal settings

Loneliness
perceived lack of meaningful
social connection



Isolation
physical, emotional, psychological
separation



Defining loneliness in legal settings



- Lack of institutional knowledge
- Impostor syndrome
- Fear of appearing incompetent
- Hesitation to ask question or seek support



- Pressure to have all the answers
- Impostor syndrome
- Need to be confident and in control
- Disconnected to younger colleagues

Identifying Loneliness



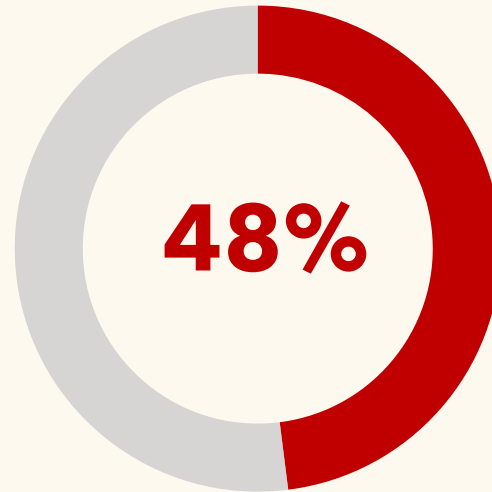


Loneliness risk factors

1. Type of law you practice
2. Long hours and unpredictability
3. High-pressure work and perfectionism
4. Confidentiality and lack of disclosure
5. Competitive firm cultures
6. Solo or remote practice models

Loneliness risk factors

Solo and remote professionals



solo practitioners
report frequent isolation

- Lack of colleague interaction and peer input
- Increased reliance on digital tools, less organic connection

Case study



Michelle
Solo practicing attorney
Family law



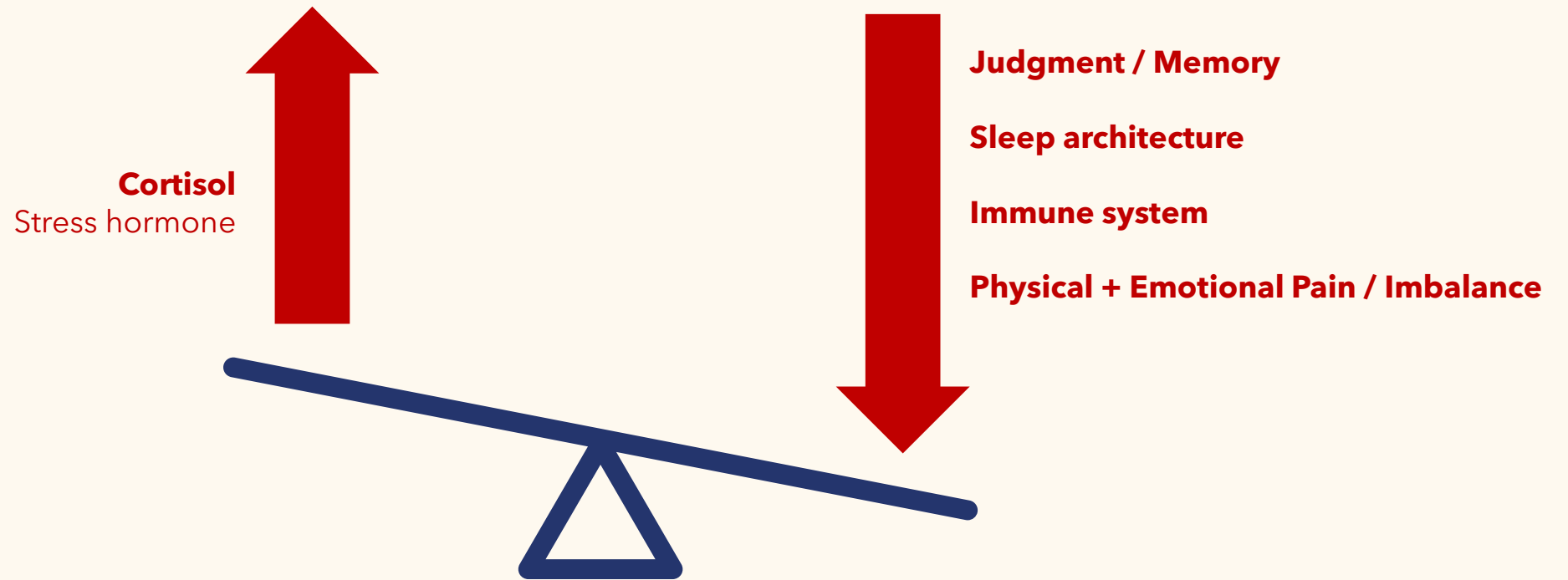
Jean
Small firm litigator
Business law



Neurobiology of Loneliness

1. Chronic loneliness activates stress hormones
2. Reduces sleep quality
3. Downregulates immune function
4. Increases sensitivity to social rejection and anxiety

Neurobiology of Loneliness





Neurodivergence and loneliness

**“The worst kind of loneliness
is to not be seen for who you
really are.”**

– Adapted from Brené Brown



Neurodivergence and Loneliness

1. Misunderstood behaviors
2. Being “othered” despite being present
3. Cost of masking
4. Microaggressions
5. Underutilized skills



Are you thinking: that's not me?

Have you ever worked through a weekend without talking to anyone outside of work and then left feeling meh?

Have you been left out of conversations you feel like you should have been in? How did it affect your energy, focus, or confidence?

Have you ever had a question you wanted to ask but you had no one to ask or you were afraid to ask it?

Case study: Neurobiology



1st year associate

- Remote worker
- No contact with manager for 10 days
- Working on complex case

Cortisol increase • Anxiety increase • Stomach issues • Lack of clarity

Loneliness can be a precursor to....



1. Depression
2. Alcohol
3. Drugs
4. Suicide

Stories behind the stats



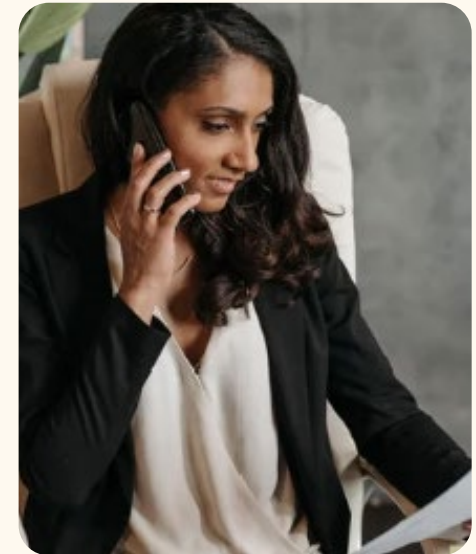
Daniel



Lena



Narin



Priya

Preventing Loneliness





Preventing loneliness

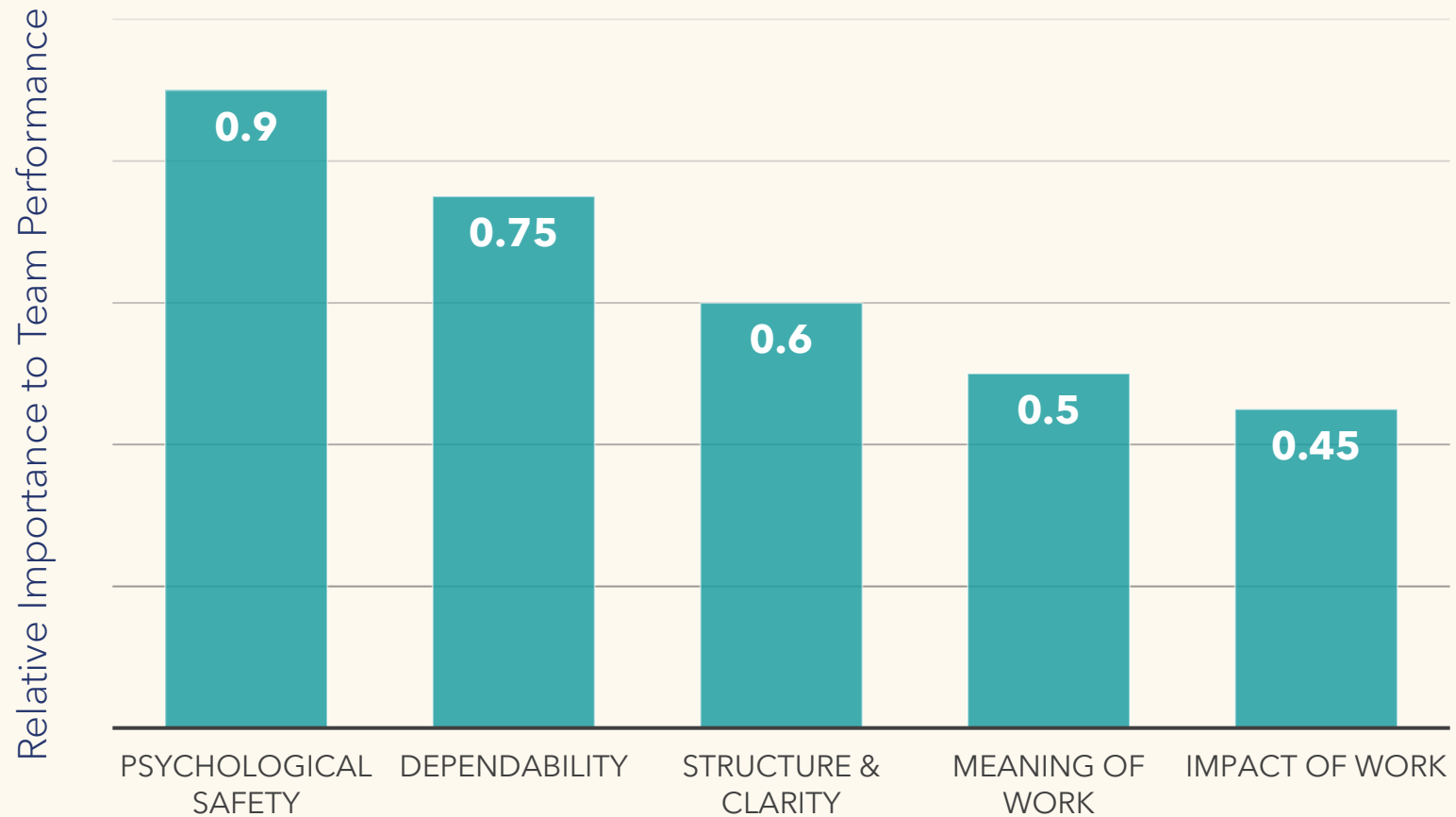
1. Peer Support Systems
2. Psychological Safety
3. Corporate offerings



Building peer support systems

1. Peer check-ins, end-of-week reflections
2. Connection micro-moments
3. Peer mentorship programs, mental health allies, affinity groups, wellness committee, buddy system
4. “Real talk” spaces,” daily “meet and greet lunches” or safe spaces to discuss loneliness and hear others stories
5. Manager training

Creating psychological safety



Key Factors For Effective Teams (Project Aristotle - Google)



Creating psychological safety

1. Promote a culture where it's safe to ask for help
2. Invite all voices to participate
3. Normalize all communication styles
4. Encourage questions, dissent, and reflection
5. Model vulnerability as a leader
6. Debrief mistakes as data



Corporate offerings

1. Anonymous helplines (e.g. Lawyer Assistance Programs)
2. Mental health benefits through EAPs or insurance
3. Firm-level well-being policies



What you can do today

1. Reach out to someone who seems withdrawn
2. Share your own experience or check-in honestly
3. Be curious without judgment to understand differences in behaviors
4. Advocate for wellness resources at your company
5. Use simple, supportive conversation starters

Final thoughts: Connection



Loneliness in the Legal Profession



MarloLyonsCoaching.com



[Work Unscripted Podcast](#)

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