mindfulness training to attenuate loneliness and foster social connection

Kirk Warren Brown
35% of Americans over 45 are chronically lonely
source: Hawkley et al., 2019
feeling alone – **loneliness** – and being alone – **lack of social ties** – are among the most robust known risk factors for poor health and accelerated mortality.
... loneliness interventions to date have not attained the degree of efficacy achieved by interventions targeting other social and behavioral outcomes

Masi, Chen, Hawkley, & Cacioppo (2011)
mindfulness training
Mindfulness

adapted from: Gross & Thompson, 2007
Mindfulness

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acceptance as **equanimity** with feelings of loneliness or social disconnect, thereby reducing social threat and obstacles that hinder social engagement
smartphone-based mindfulness training
The graph shows the loneliness levels before (pre-tx) and after (post-tx) training for different groups: MA, MO, and Ctl. The source of the data is Lindsey et al., 2019.
The graph shows the change in social interactions before (pre-tx) and after (post-tx) training for three groups: MA, MO, and Ctrl. The source of this data is Lindsey et al., 2019.
Interaction partners

pre-tx  post-tx

MA  MO  Ctl

source: Lindsey et al., 2019
awareness of social cues and emotional reactions to them (monitoring/orienting) while adopting a receptive, nonreactive attitude (acceptance) may aid in regulating emotions, thereby reducing social threat perceptions
monitoring the emotional discomfort of loneliness while maintaining an accepting attitude may allow lonely feelings to dissipate.... social distress is reduced, encouraging more social engagement
sustainability of effects
need to target the lonely, socially isolated
technology challenges
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Emily Lindsay, PhD
J David Creswell, PhD
Shinzen Young, PhD
Joshua Smyth, PhD

Thank You