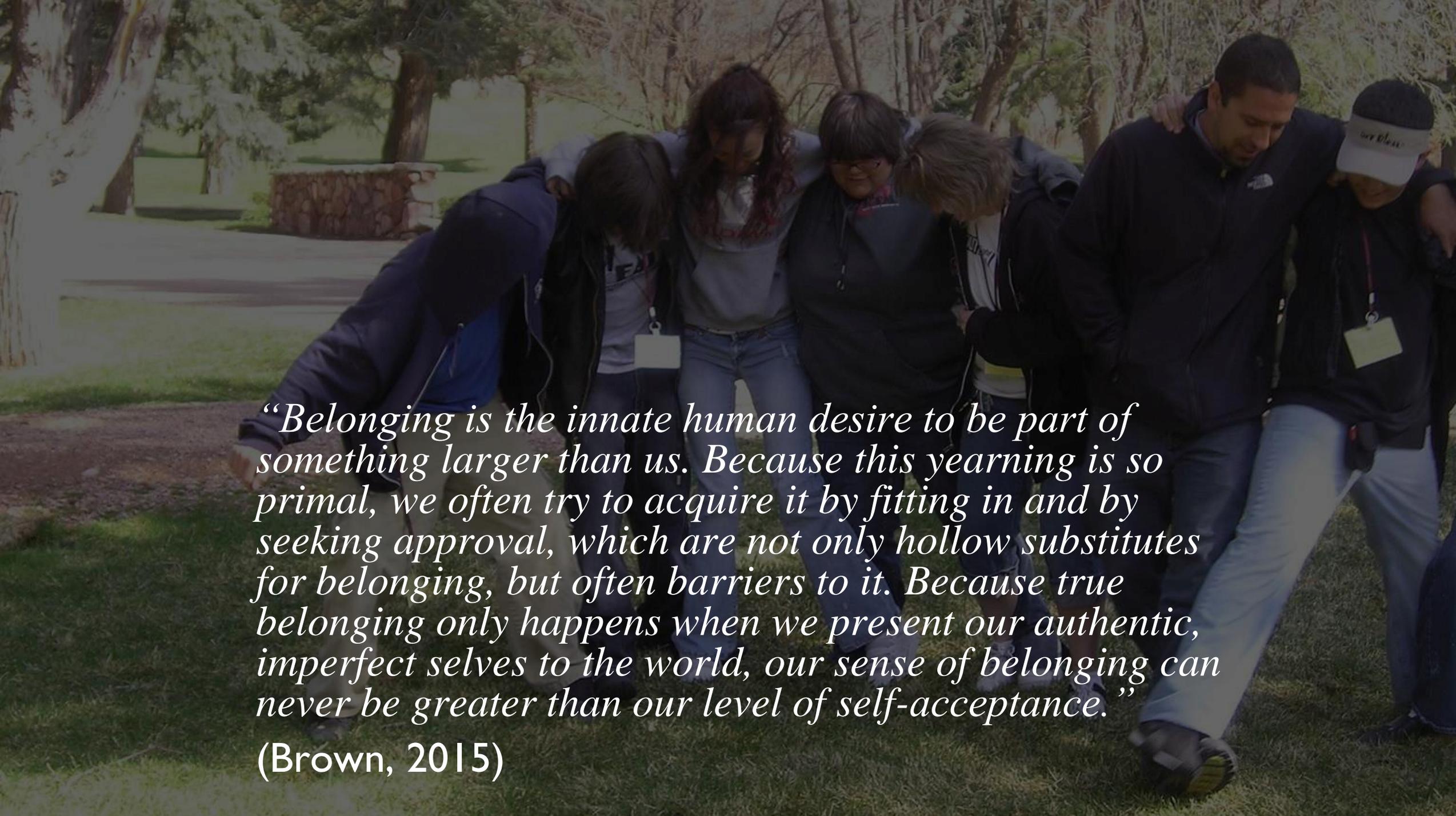


YOU ARE ENOUGH: INCREASING YOUTH AND ADULT BELONGING

Nariah Smith
Heather Kennedy

A group of about seven people are standing in a line on a grassy area, leaning their heads and shoulders on each other's shoulders. They are dressed in casual outdoor attire like jackets and jeans. The background shows trees and a stone wall. The overall mood is one of unity and support.

“Belonging is the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us. Because this yearning is so primal, we often try to acquire it by fitting in and by seeking approval, which are not only hollow substitutes for belonging, but often barriers to it. Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance.”

(Brown, 2015)

HAVE YOU EVER?

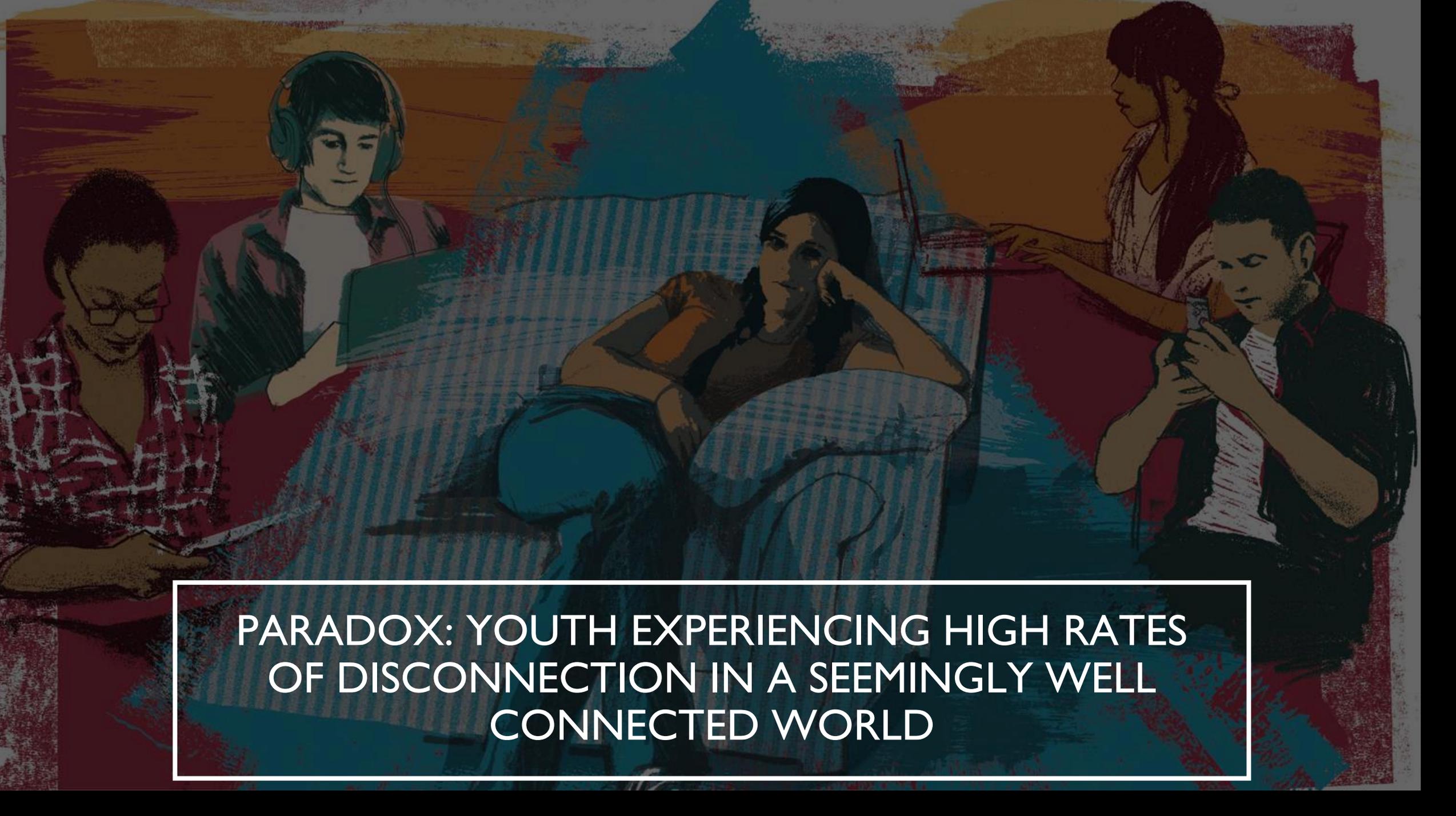
- Been told that, in order to be listened to, you had to act more mature.
- Been told that you are too young to know anything about ____.
- Has someone ever told you *“we will talk about this when you are older”*
- Thought (or been told) that you don't know as much as you should.
- Treated someone as if they were *“up to no good”*
- Have you said you are *“so smart for your age”*
- Said *“you'll get over it”* or *“I've got worse problems”*
- Said or been told *“you need to think before you speak”*

NARIAH'S STORY





HEATHER'S STORY



PARADOX: YOUTH EXPERIENCING HIGH RATES
OF DISCONNECTION IN A SEEMINGLY WELL
CONNECTED WORLD

LONELINESS: AN EMERGING HEALTH THREAT

Nearly half of Americans report sometimes or always feeling alone (46 percent) or left out (47 percent).

Generation Z is the loneliest generation and claims to be in worse health than older generations.

People who **experienced discrimination** because of their race, gender, sexuality or disability have significantly **higher rates of loneliness**.

A dark teal circle with a white border, containing the text 'UCLA LONELINESS SCALE' in white, uppercase letters. The circle is positioned on the left side of the slide, partially overlapping a dark grey vertical bar.

UCLA
LONELINESS
SCALE

1. I lack companionship
2. I feel a part of a group of friends
3. I feel left out
4. I feel isolated from others
5. I am unhappy being so withdrawn
6. People are around me but not with me.

(Neto, 2014)

HOW DOES SOCIAL MEDIA CONTRIBUTE TO LONELINESS?

Passive scrolling & mostly only online friends—increased loneliness and depression.

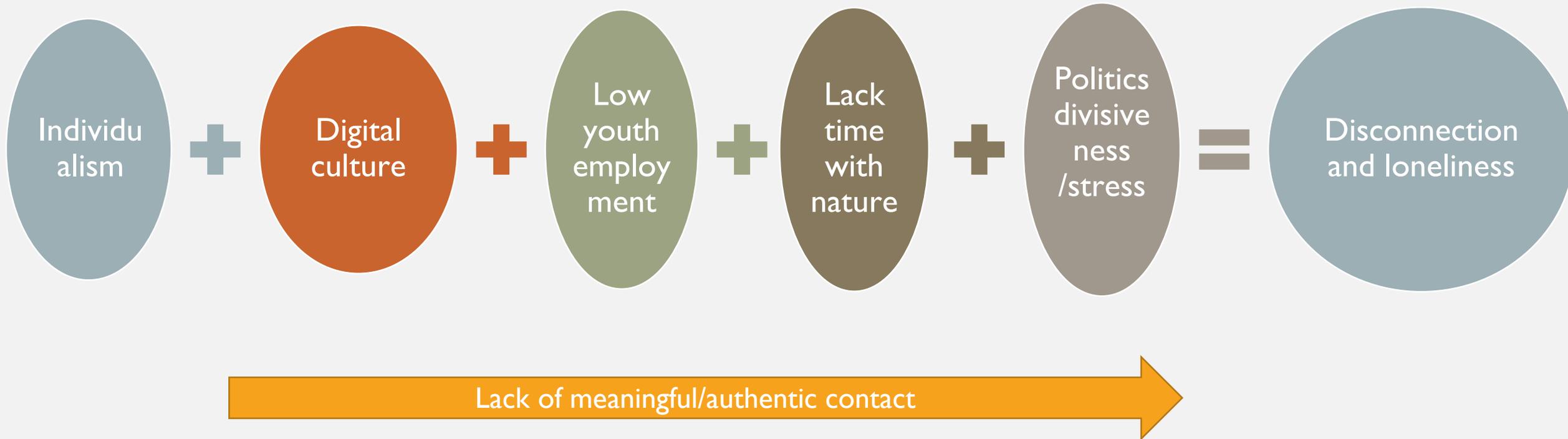
Engaging in discussions, making plans, connecting over shared interests—not related to loneliness.

*social media use among peers related to development of social competence

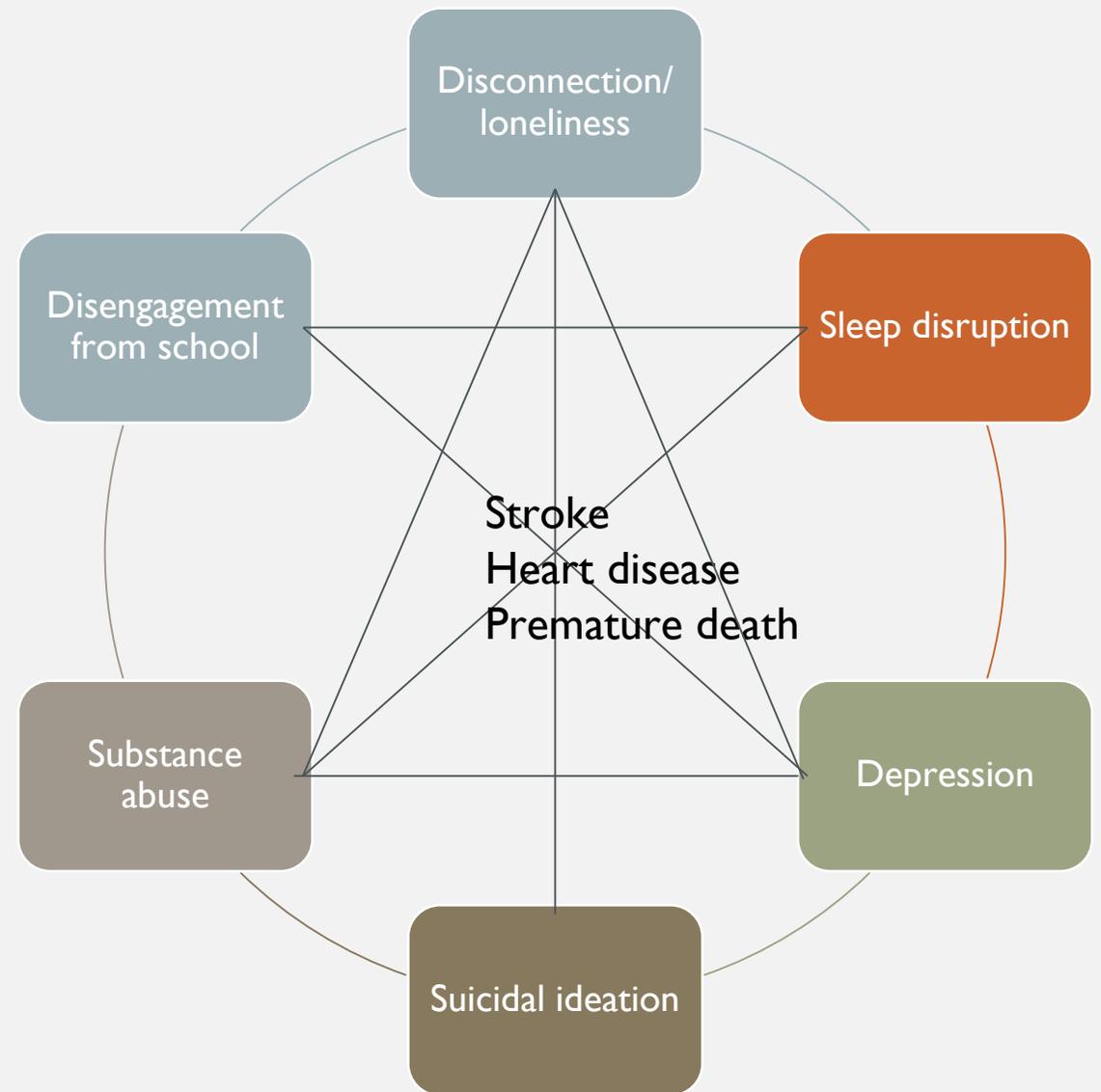
(Mills, 2016)



WHAT IS CAUSING LONELINESS?



IMPACTS OF LONELINESS



(Harris, Qualter, & Robinson, 2013; Leigh-hunt et al., 2017; Stickley, A., Koyanagi, A., Kuposov, R. et al., 2014).)



**INCREASE
TRANSFORMATIONAL RATHER THAN
TRANSACTIONAL CONNECTIONS**



YOUTH: CONNECT TO YOUR PEERS

- Be open to upper and underclassmen (all peers)
- Do what you love!
 - Find people with similar interests
- Try something new
 - E.g. Dungeons and Dragons
- When you cannot be together, play games online
- Go outside
- Put in the effort, don't wait around for an invitation

YOUTH: CONNECT TO ADULTS

- Have an open mind
- Give respect to get respect
- Listen to adults but take what is useful
- Have deeper conversations
 - Try again . . .
- Find adults who share your interests
 - Ask questions, get to know them
- Teach them something (e.g. TikTok)
- Trust your gut





**YOUTH
CONNECT TO YOUR COMMUNITY**

- **Ask for recommendations from adults/parents**
- **Get out there and try new stuff**
- **Look at flyers on bulletin boards**
 - **Ask at school**

ADULTS: SUPPORT THE ESSENCE OF
ADOLESCENCE

ES: Emotional Spark

SE: Social engagement

N: Novelty-seeking

CE: Creative Expression



BE A SUPPORTIVE ADULT



Talking not telling- a low-key tone



Encouragement and role modeling



Honesty, transparency, & follow through



Own and apologize when you make mistakes

ADULTS: AMPLIFY YOUTH'S VOICES

- Advocate for youth voices in decision-making
- Learn what sparks their joy and passion
- Challenge deficit thinking about youth
- Connect youth to resources and opportunities
- Vet opportunities first

Adults who
listen should
help the youth
be heard

**YOU ARE WHO YOU'VE BEEN
LOOKING FOR**

Adam Roa

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