

# L O N E L I N E S S

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*THE ILLNESS OF OUR CENTURY*

*SEMESTER 1 - 2019 - GROUP E  
THE GREAT TRANSITION*

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# THE ILLNESS OF OUR CENTURY : LONELINESS

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During his speech at Sciences Po on October 3, Mr Georges DE LA VILLE BAUGÉ stressed the fact that 77% of French people have experienced moments of solitudes, and 44% of them quite often remain this feeling. This sad observation led us to think about a project, a solution that could help prevent people from loneliness as well as help the victims of this disease. Indeed, loneliness is a disease that affects many people at all ages and around the world. Loneliness is one of the most serious and widespread diseases in the world, and it is in the developed countries that it is most prevalent. In October 2018, British Prime Minister Theresa MAY launched the creation of an entire Ministry dedicated to loneliness.

But why is this disease such a concern? First of all, it is a disease that, on a basic level, affects older people more easily than young people, because of social ties that are weakening over time. Five categories of social groups have been identified: family, friendly, professional, neighbourhood or affinity. When some of these groups weaken and weaken our social ties with the rest of society we can be led to loneliness. This is why, originally, the people most affected by loneliness were the elderly: retired, who move less easily and therefore less often, who have lost their spouse, living alone etc.

However, with the emergence and pervasiveness of social networks, adolescents are increasingly affected by this phenomenon. This feeling of permanent connection with the rest of the world is illusory and this exposure generated to the rest of the world tends to generate frustration, disappointment or even jealousy with some people. In the United States, for example, according to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center, 36% of girls experience extreme anxiety on a daily basis, linked to loneliness. Thus the causes are more and more varied, present and affect more people nowadays.

But what about the consequences ? In fact, a person who suffers from loneliness has a certain psychological fragility that can worsen and ultimately lead to mental, mental or even physical fragility. A 2015 study by Brigham Young University highlighted the positive correlation between loneliness and obesity, alcoholism and smoking. Other symptoms can also appear such as insomnia, high blood pressure, indigestion and many other problems. In addition to their significant social and health costs, loneliness has a cost. In an interview with Jacques ATTALI in 2010, he mentioned a cost of about 1% of French GDP to finance the care and care of people who are victims of loneliness.

Thus, falling into this vicious circle of loneliness represents a real danger for the individual himself, but also for the rest of society. This disease is increasingly visible in developed societies, with a high use of social networks and a loss of the real social bond must be taken in hand.





## II. PROPOSED CONCEPT : THE FAMILY CIRCLE.

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The idea is to create a website, specifically for families and teachers, on the subject of loneliness for children, that are between 4 and 6 years old. We chose to focus on this age for specific reasons. Those kids are still very young and haven't generally been faced with loneliness yet. The goal is for this website to help the one that are educating them in their first years to prevent them. In order to prevent them, their education will be focusing on teaching them how to be alone and happy, how to better interact with others and how to acknowledge those children that might be faced with loneliness. The parents and the teachers, thanks to this website will be more aware of this stake, which is rarely evoked in the educational background.

The website will be divided in two : one part will be interactive and the other informative. The interactive part will focus on having people share their experiences, their problems and communicate together. It aims to have people share together, in order to realize how common the theme of loneliness is, since it is shared by many people. The informative part will focus on making people more aware on what is loneliness and how they can relate to it.

The informative part of the website aims to be more professional : we could have scientists, psychologists and experts interviewed, throughout articles and researches done in the world. Online editors could give monthly news, according to what comes out. There could be many positive impacts, thanks to this website. Kids often don't realize that they are lonely, they don't put a word on it. Having the people that educate them more aware on this subject will necessarily not only be efficient in terms of prevention, but also to help find concrete solutions. This website aims to help kids be more self confident and sociable at a young age, in order to a beneficial impact throughout their primary education that will last a lifetime.

This means that the website is not only there to help children, but also the educators better approach this phenomenon, which has recently evolved due to new technologies for example. The advantage of a website is that it is easy to put in place, very accessible and can be adapted, depending on the feedbacks given by the users and the trends.

### III. EXPECTED POSITIVE IMPACTS

The positive direct benefits follow as people who are responsible of taking care of kids can have theoretical understanding of the phenomena related to loneliness and practical advice on how to deal with the problem. With the academic articles published on the website, people can comprehend what is loneliness, how and why it occurs, and, in the end, understand that loneliness is indeed not a disease but something that will always be accompanied with human lives. With the community built on website, people can bond and feel that they are not the only one dealing with the subject.

Indirect benefits are that although the education system might have different facets depending on the country, it is evident that educational institutions mostly functions as a platform to transmit the knowledge - language, math, science, history, and etc. By partnering with and implementing the proposed program at schools, the website can impact on expanding the education dynamic into more applicable and open minded subjects. As a result, this new platform can contribute to the global education system to depart from conservative ideology, which was built in the 20th century when monarchism and dictatorship ruled society, and move onto innovate the education system adapted to a more connected and democratized world.

In order to operate the website for long term, the website will have to maintain a certain amount of users(quantitative) and deliverable(qualitative) helpful for those who are seeking for solutions. Therefore, the website will first have to partner with educational institutions, civic centers, and parenting community, all of which will perpetually utilize the system. In this way, the website can secure adequate number of clicks in order not to be a dead(inactive) website. Also, with active traffic on the platform, it is guaranteed to have new contents. For the qualitative part, experts of loneliness will be posting new academic articles and analysis to update the users of the subject.

In this regard, users can always discover the current discourse and news related to loneliness. On the other hand, ordinary people (the users) can communicate with others about the problems they are facing, therefore, this website can function as an agora to share ideas and build human connection.

### IV. THE MAJOR RISKS OUR PROJECT COULD FACE

As described earlier in this work, our goal is to create a platform to warn people of the dangers of loneliness and to provide them with solutions to better take care of and help someone who is suffering from loneliness. However, this idea presents two risks that it must take into account to ensure the sustainability and safety of the project.

The first is to ensure the quality of information of a professional and medical nature; and the second is to ensure the confidentiality of users' data. Indeed, for the first risk it is important that our platform can be fed and supervised by medical professionals, the most knowledgeable about this problem. We therefore need the support of doctors, psychologists and specialists to guarantee the quality of our service. Working with people with psychological problems, it is important to provide them with adequate follow-up and support for their needs and problems.

Finally, the second risk is quite sensitive. The use of the platform implies the posting of important and confidential personal data. In order for our monitoring to be as thorough, serious and professional as possible we must ensure a service with maximum security of the data of individuals. Our application/platform is not for profit or commercial, so it is not in our interest to collect and resell patient data. On the contrary, our goal is to help with a personalized and unique support for each of our patients. Finally, a key notion to keep in mind about our project and the nature of its service: we work with patients and not clients.



# V . D E P L O Y M E N T S T R A T E G Y A N D M A J O R M I L E S T O N E S

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Yet, we need a clear strategy in order to make our website successful and helpful. On a more technical aspect, we plan to get recognition for our website by making it known and used by our target community of professors and parents. They are not the easiest target to convince that our initiative could have an impact especially because the problem we're facing is huge, and given that we won't be directly speaking to the people we aim, our educational and social purpose must be understood and recognized by them to be applied and offered to the very first concerned : the children. To do so, relying on professionals and scientists would be necessary, and we already consider that we will need to build a long term legitimacy.

Another focus for us is to better differentiate the way we present the information on our website and the solutions we propose from what already exist in terms of content relating to our subject. More than just trying upload original content, we chose to think of our website as a concentrate, condensed and verified support for all of the existing actors to be a part of. We will need to synthesize, check, correct the informations that we find or that is sent to us, and to make it understandable by our visitors. Our project won't be useful if the content he's providing is not helping in any way, lacks of precision or on the contrary is too much detailed. This has to be kept in the balance as it will be an important part of our value.

For the other part of our website, which will be participatory, we have to keep in mind the basic aspects of such an online forum to apprehend its development. The first issue we would have to resolve would certainly be the launch of the forum and the lack of content for its users. To be successful, we will probably need to artificially feed content on it during the first weeks, as the growing number of users would finally let us concentrate the moderation aspect. Indeed, the moderation of a forum could represent some time investment and it has to be taken in count, as we would deeply suffer from our platform being used by persons with bad intentions.



## VI. ORGANIZATION: WHO CAN SUPPORT US?

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In order to ensure the success of this project, we need to look at the prospect of finding partners and sponsors who can provide adequate support and allow the website and its idea to prosper.

This project will need two main kinds of support, the first being informative support, and the second being financial support. In terms of informative support, the team will be looking into experts, professionals and organizations working within the field of knowledge and research in loneliness and its surrounding concepts, and establishing partnerships with said entities in order to get support in the content we provide on our website and its accuracy and relevance to the audience. This task is crucial, because our professional content sections will act as the building blocks of our project as a whole, and without cementing possible partnerships with research centers, colleges, professional psychologists, sociologists and NGOs, the project will not be able to take off.

The second kind of support this project is looking for is, quite obviously, financial support. Without financial support, none of the necessary steps required to advance the project - which certainly require a certain level of financial power - would be implemented. The task of finding financial sponsors is as important as it is difficult. In order to be able to attract possible sponsors, our project's core ideas and concepts should be properly presented in an appealing manner to the entities who could possibly sponsor it. Those possible entities include different national and international organizations that deal with the topic of loneliness and mental health, as well as academic and educational institutions and, hopefully, philanthropists who would be willing to support the cause highlighted by the project.

With these methods of support in mind, we hope to build a well-connected, well-established network of partners and sponsors who can help us grow and reach the highest amount of people as possible. This will give the project a push in its quality and reach, which is particularly important in the beginning of this project's life.



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