

Tricia Johnson (00:01):

It's Aspen ideas to go from the Aspen Institute. I'm Trisha Johnson loneliness as a public health concern says Vivek Murthy. The former surgeon, general and author of together says a lack of connection contributes to epidemics like alcohol and drug addiction, depression, and anxiety. So now that we're all using zoom to connect, are we lonelier?

Vivek Murthy (00:24):

We allow physical distancing to translate into social distancing. Then what we will experience will be a deepening of our loneliness. What we will incur is something akin to a social recession, which will have consequences for our health and for our wellbeing that are just as serious as the economic recession we may be faced with,

Tricia Johnson (00:41):

But he says it doesn't have to be this way. We can choose the path of social revival in the pandemic Aspen ideas to go brings you compelling conversations, hosted by the Aspen Institute. The Institute drives change through dialogue, leadership, and action to help solve the greatest challenges of our time. Today's discussion was held by Aspen ideas, health for his book together, the VEC Murphy traveled across the world to discover why people were so lonely. He met with doctors, scientists, children, parents, and community members. He found that forces like technology distance from loved ones and the pursuit of individual goals can be isolating. Also, people are ashamed of feeling lonely. So it's not talked about Murphy wrote the book before the COVID-19 crisis, but its message is especially salient today. He says we can use the shared experience of the pandemic as an opportunity to fortify and strengthen our connections and communities. He speaks with all the on a staff writer for the Atlantic here's Cazan first, can you, can you walk us through the definition of loneliness versus solitude? What are some of the symptoms of loneliness? What does loneliness look like?

Vivek Murthy (01:52):

You know, Olga, I did not anticipate working on this subject of loneliness and social connection or writing this book. I in fact came out of office with a couple of other books I had in mind that I wanted to write, but sometimes, you know, life's leads you in a different direction. And in many ways I was inspired to work on this by the people that I met around the country, who through their own stories, well, they never actually said I'm lonely. They spoke to the deep, deep pain that loneliness brings and to the consequences that it has for our health and wellbeing. When I think about loneliness, I think of it as quite distinct from isolation and here definitions matter. So loneliness is a subjective feeling. It's a feeling that the connections you need in your life are greater than the connections you have. And in that gap, you experience loneliness.

Vivek Murthy (02:40):

And this is in contrast to objective measures like isolation, which, which more describe the number of people you have around you. But what we've realized is that you can be around many people, but still feel profoundly lonely. If you don't feel you can show up as yourself, if you don't feel people understand you. And that unfortunately is the case for so many, including young, young people on college campuses, people in new workplaces or people when they move to a new city and around people that don't don't quite have relationships yet. Uh, there's one last difference I mentioned, which is the difference between loneliness and solitude, because solitude can also be a state of aloneness, so to speak, but it's a state of peaceful aloneness. It's actually a state that we all need to spend some time in

because our solitude is actually when we have a moment to reflect, to let the noise around us, settle, to regroup ourselves, to recenter ourselves. And it turns out that solitude ends up being incredibly important for our ability to approach others from a state of grounded-ness, uh, from a place where we can truly listen to them and be fully present ourselves.

Olga Khazan ([03:47](#)):

Hmm. I was wondering, um, I wanted to learn more about this, uh, listening tour that you took as surgeon general. Um, I, I'm curious about why do people feel lonely? I mean, what, what are some of the causes of the loneliness that you heard as you talked to folks?

Vivek Murthy ([04:02](#)):

You know, it's an interesting question a little bit, cause I don't know that people always knew why they were lonely. Um, but many just felt it. In fact, I talked to many young people who would often say, you know, I I'm in touch with my friends all the time. We know where you two are texting constantly. We're, you know, we're on social media a lot and we message each other. And we post on each other's who we reply to each other's posts, we're interacting a lot, but yet I still find somehow feel lonely and they were trying to figure it out. I met a lot of parents who are worried about their children. They saw them using devices all the time, including spending a lot of time in social media. And they wondered is this making my child more connected or less connected? What was interesting or kind of how it showed up is that there was never somebody who came to me and said, hi, I'm Olga I'm, [inaudible] I'm feeling lonely.

Vivek Murthy ([04:52](#)):

What they would actually do is it would start by telling me about their struggles with addiction, about their concerns, about violence. They would talk about their worry about chronic illnesses like obesity, you know, being on the rise in their community. They would talk about depression and anxiety that they and their family members struggled with. But behind so many of these stories where these threads of loneliness and they would often say things like, I feel I have to carry all of these burdens on my own, or I feel if I disappear tomorrow, nobody would care or I feel absolutely invisible. And hearing that again and again, from students and parents from fishermen and villages in Alaska to members of Congress in Washington, DC behind closed doors, I was reminded of two things. We'll go one more of my own personal experiences, struggling with loneliness as a child where I found it painful to come to school each day, because I was so shy and had such a hard time making friends that it just felt like an outcast.

Vivek Murthy ([05:49](#)):

And the hardest part of the day as a child was lunchtime. When I had to come to the gap, walk into the cafeteria and wonder if there would be somebody to sit to, but it would also reminded me all guy, those conversations as surgeon general, about my time in medicine, practicing and caring for patients and recognizing once I entered the hospital that so many patients were actually struggling with loneliness too. They would come in alone and we had to make really hard decisions about a treatment course, or we had to give them really difficult news about a new diagnosis. I would often ask him, is there somebody I can call to have them come in? So we can have this conversation together. And they would often say, there's nobody to call. I wish there was. And so I was reminded of those personal experiences when I was surgeon general, but I was also taught by the people I met across the country and really around the world that loneliness was not unique to my own experience, but that it was far more common than I had thought with more than 20% of adults in the United States, struggling with loneliness with a quarter of the Australian and UK population struggling with it.

Vivek Murthy (06:52):

But that it was also consequential that it had real impacts on our health increasing our risk of heart disease and dementia, depression, anxiety, premature death, as well as sleep disturbances. And the list goes on.

Olga Khazan (07:06):

I was wondering, um, so I, my book also briefly touches on loneliness, not to the extent that yours does, um, and something that people occasionally say is like, Oh, well that's such a, um, like a middle school feeling or a, that's such a, um, and you mentioned school as well. Um, and I, I do get the sense sometimes that people, adults are reluctant to talk about loneliness and, and it kind of comes off as like, Oh, well, I, I, yeah, I dealt with that as a teenager, but I never deal with that anymore. You know, why is there this stigma and kind of, um, feeling of like, it's kind of strange or icky to talk about loneliness?

Vivek Murthy (07:44):

Well, there is this deep shame that comes with it. And I think it stems from feeling that if you admit that you're lonely, you're somehow had many, you're either not likable or that you're broken in some way. And nobody really wants to feel that, you know, no, no one wants to feel like they're a quote unquote loser, which is what saying I'm lonely feels like to so many people. And it's one of the felt like to me as a child, which is why I never told my parents, although in all those years, but I think as adults, we also feel that shame. But loneliness also, what's interesting about it is it looks different in different people's lives. And even in our own lives, it can look differently at different stages as a child, they may look like feeling embarrassed on the playground when you're not chosen to be on a team or being alone with your tray full of food in the cafeteria with no one to sit next to.

Vivek Murthy (08:36):

But what's very interesting as you look at adulthood and what you find is that new parents often struggle with loneliness too, because their lives are turned upside down. They're not seeing their friends because their evenings are with their newborn baby. Um, they're not hanging out with rally with, uh, coworkers because all of their spare time has gone toward family now. And they often don't feel comfortable saying that they're lonely because it's somehow it feels like they're ungrateful. They've just been blessed with this child. And yet somehow they're complaining about their loneliness. Um, so you know, new parents has struggled with this. And what's interesting is that older people, especially older men are especially at risk of loneliness. When one of three things happens to them when they retire, when they lose their spouse or when they become ill and the way loneliness so often shows up in the lives of elderly men is not the, in the ways I've described before.

Vivek Murthy (09:29):

It shows up as irritability, as anger, short-tempered newness. And the more you look at it, you realize that in some people, anger is a manifestation of loneliness and other people it's withdrawal. And other people, it looks like depression and some, it looks like anxiety. And so if we don't recognize that loneliness is in fact the great masquerader, which looks like anything, but a person sitting in the corner of a room all alone at a party, then we'll likely miss it. So the combination of those different manifestations and the shame around loneliness makes it an invisible challenge. And so, so many of us walk around feeling lonely, but we look around us and think everyone is deeply connected and that's something

Olga Khazan ([10:11](#)):

Right. And I, um, I, one of the things I wanted to make sure to get into was, um, kind of how this increase, you know, we've seen two trajectories in the country. One is an increase in polarization and one is an increase in loneliness. Um, and I can intuitively see how, you know, people, each being in their own bubble, um, you know, could contribute to loneliness. But I was wondering kind of how, how do those two play out? How does loneliness cause polarization?

Vivek Murthy ([10:40](#)):

Yeah, it's a really good question. And there's an interesting link here because it turns out that one of the important things that you need in order to truly build community and to truly have dialogue is you actually need a foundation of human connection. And here's why when we have relationship with somebody else, meaning that either their close friends or their family, or they're simply a neighbor or community member that we spoken to for five minutes, openly and authentically and connected on the basis of shared concerns or our children or our careers, when you have any type of relationship like that, it makes it easier to listen to someone else. It makes us more willing to trust to give them the benefit of the doubt. And that makes dialogue easier in dialogue is what makes it possible for people to come together and take on big problems.

Vivek Murthy ([11:35](#)):

Whether those are how to support the schools in their community or how to sorrow solve global problems, that climate change. And so as we have become more distanced from another, another, and more disconnected as our institutions, that support community connection have shriveled in a sense over the last several decades. What we've seen is that people have become more and more siloed that they interact with folks who think more and more like them online. They don't have a reason to interact with people who maybe have a different life experience who might be literally their neighbor next door, right? But they don't have to interact with them. There's no need to. And so people have become more and more siloed. And so they've built fewer relationships in their communities, which means that they're less invested in their community, which also means that they can't work together as easily with others.

Vivek Murthy ([12:25](#)):

And this has deep spillover effects. It starts locally, but it has national and global implications. And so if you want to build a greater dialogue, if you want people to actually be able to solve problems together, the way you do that is not by bringing people with polarized views together, putting them in a room and telling them to talk out their views and find common ground. That might seem logical, but it's actually not how human beings work. We're much more emotionally driven creatures when it comes to relationship. So if you want people to come together on tough issues, you have to start with building relationship first, and that may have nothing to do with issue itself. It may be then breaking bread together, getting to know each other, establishing a foundation for trust. But once they do that, they're more able to listen. They're more able to dialogue, and that is how you start solving problems.

Vivek Murthy ([13:15](#)):

That is why the polarization we're dealing with in the world today is actually not just an American phenomenon, but it's a global phenomenon because so many of the factors that are impacting us and in fact, weakening our ties with each other, whether that's how we use technology or whether that's mobility or whether that's certain norms in modern culture, which tell us that our self-worth is

connected to our ability to acquire wealth, power, or fame. All of those are actually facets of global modern culture now. And that's why I think we're also seeing a straining and a weakening of relationships and polarization

Tricia Johnson ([14:01](#)):

It's Aspen ideas to go. Thanks for listening. Local elected leaders are in the eye of the storm when it comes to the upheaval caused by lockdowns, surging, unemployment and food insecurity, a new series from Aspen ideas now features mayors and governors facing tough decisions in the debut episode of leading on the front lines, new Orleans mayor, Latoya Cantrell describes what's at stake as the city reopens for business. One Saturday, may the 16th at 6:00 AM. Uh, we officially, uh, reopened the city through phase one. Uh, we allowed or loosened restrictions around our retail and our restaurants. Cantrell talks about priorities like contact tracing and healthcare assessability with CNN. Suzanne, find the episode on our website, Aspen ideas.org. Let's get back to our featured conversation. Here's older cousin.

Olga Khazan ([15:02](#)):

I feel like we're in such a difficult time for, um, for loneliness. I mean, we're kind of right now mandated to stay apart from each other. Um, a lot of people, you know, they might be trying to reach out through zoom or whatever else, but some people are experiencing zoom fatigue. Um, you know, it's not quite the same to Skype with someone as it is to sit down over a drink or dinner. Um, w what should people do about loneliness? How should they reach out and build those connections during a time of social distancing?

Vivek Murthy ([15:33](#)):

Well, it's a great question. I'll go, and I do want to acknowledge. Yeah, it's hard, right? It's, it's hard for all of us. You know, there, there are times that you walk around when you're having a hard time, you look around the world and you say, gosh, everyone's living the dream. They seem to have amazing parties are going to, at least based on their Instagram feed. They seem to be happy all the time, but this is one of those moments. And first of all, that's generally not even true. Like at the time people are struggling and they're, you just can't see it. But this is a moment where we know just about everyone is struggling in some way to make sense of what's happening to write their world, which has been turned upside down in so many ways. And so, as we think about how to build connection this moment, I think we have to recognize what the what's at stake stake.

Vivek Murthy ([16:12](#)):

So if we do nothing differently, if we allow physical distancing to translate into social distancing, then what we will experience will be a deepening of our loneliness. What we will incur is something akin to a social recession, which will have consequences for our health and for our wellbeing that are just as serious as the economic recession we may be faced with. But I don't think it has to be that way. I think we have a choice here. We can choose instead of a social recession, we can choose the path of social revival. And the way we can do that with COVID-19 is to one, use this as a moment to step back and take stock of our lives, to recognize the importance of relationships and how foundational they are to our health, to our wellbeing, and to our overall fulfillment. And to use this as an opportunity to recommit to the people in our life.

Vivek Murthy ([17:03](#)):

Even though we can't see each other right now, there are concrete things we can do. We can make it a point to spend at least 15 minutes with the people that we love that could be video conferencing, calling them on the phone, writing to them to say, Hey, I'm thinking of you. I want to know how you are. And even though that's not the same as being in person when done consistently, that can serve as a lifeline to the outside world. And your second thing we can do is we can focus on the quality of the connection with others. Even if we don't spend a single minute more with the people that we love, if we make it a point to eliminate distraction, when we're talking to them, if we give them the gift of our full attention, that can be an extraordinary way of deepening the satisfaction that we feel when we're with them and the connection that both, both parties feel.

Vivek Murthy ([17:47](#)):

That's an easy thing to conceptualize. It's not always an easy thing to do. And I say, this is somebody who has spent far too many conversations, multitasking and scrolling through my social media feed and checking my inbox and Googling the question that pops into my head while I'm talking to somebody. And I say that with some embarrassment. And I know now that that has been counterproductive to what I was trying to achieve, which is quality time with my friends. The last few things I'll mention that we can actually do our third. We can look for ways to serve now. So one of the surprises for me in writing this book was to discover that service is a powerful antidote to loneliness that when we are chronically lonely, we develop these counterintuitive tendencies. Um, because we feel this sense of threat at being alone. Our intention turns inward.

Vivek Murthy ([18:32](#)):

We actually become more hypervigilant and more suspicious of people around us. And we tend to experience this erosion of self-esteem as we come to believe that maybe we're lonely because we're not likable. Service is powerful because they're short circuits as mechanisms. It reaffirms to for us, that we have value to bring to the world, but also shifts our focus from us to someone else in the context of a positive interaction. These three things are extraordinarily powerful, but simple tools that you can use to strengthen connection. And when you add them to the fourth and final one, which is solitude the importance of preserving moments of solitude in our life, these form, the foundation for connected life, you know, we talked a little bit about solid solitude earlier, but solidarity is so powerful because so often in this, in the modern world, which is racing faster and faster in a world that's filled with uncertainty, particularly during COVID-19, we can walk around, just feel, feeling drained and frazzled all the time.

Vivek Murthy ([19:29](#)):

And when you approach other people from a place of being drained, it's harder to form a great connection. It's harder to feel that sense of fulfillment that we all want to feel when we interact with others. But what's really striking about solitude is even a few moments of solitude. Just a couple of minutes sitting outside on your stoop, feeling the breeze against your face, a few minutes, remembering three things you're grateful for, or meditating or praying or reading something that brings you joy can be restorative. I had a teacher in medical school, dr. Peggy BIA, who had a really busy life as a mom to two amazing kids, a teacher and administrator, a clinical leader, but what she would do having not a whole lot of time is she would take the 20 seconds that she was washing her hands before she walked into a patient's room. And she would just let the warm water run over her hands,

Speaker 4 ([20:19](#)):

Take a deep breath,

Vivek Murthy ([20:20](#)):

And just think about the things that she was grateful for that day. Maybe it was this smile that her boys gave her when she said goodbye that morning, maybe it was a appreciation of a medical student that she taught earlier in the day, or the opportunity to participate in the healing of the patient. She was just about to visit. And then she would turn the faucet off, try her hands and walk into that

Speaker 4 ([20:43](#)):

Room, feeling more rooted, more grounded, and

Vivek Murthy ([20:48](#)):

More capable of bringing her full self to that interaction with the patient. And that was all with 20 seconds. So these moments of solitude are powerful, not because of how long they are, but even because short moments can make a big difference in our life.

Olga Khazan ([21:02](#)):

Yeah. And I, um, I want to make sure to take some questions from the audience. And one of the first ones that popped up is pretty interesting to me, actually, I, you, um, you think that the UK is doing a better job of addressing mental health than the U S is, um, based on the fact that I know they had like a loneliness ministry for a while and, and things like that, how do you feel like they're making more progress than we are?

Vivek Murthy ([21:26](#)):

Well, I think there are certainly ahead of us in making, addressing loneliness and social connection and national priority. Uh, their appointment of a minister who would have loneliness in her portfolio was a step in that direction. And it sends a strong signal to the country. And frankly to the world, that loneliness is a national priority. That it's a strategic issue that we have to work on. If we want to improve health, we want to improve economic productivity. If we want to take care of people. And in that sense, we have not done that yet. As a country, we have an elevated the issue in that way. This is actually an interesting place where government has a unique role that it can play. So what government can do is number one, it can fund research on areas like loneliness, which have been vastly underfunded over time.

Vivek Murthy ([22:12](#)):

Number two, it can identify issues as a priority and call the nation's attention to them. But the third thing it can do is it can also help bring people together and set an, a common agenda and a vision for what we should be doing to create a more connected society. The government has played roles like this in the past, whether it's developing a national strategy to address HIV or other concerns, but that's a really powerful role. That's very difficult to replicate outside of government. And it's a role I would love to see our government in the U S take on.

Olga Khazan ([22:44](#)):

Yeah. Um, I was wondering, so another, another question that came up that I have also been wondering about, um, why is there a resistance in health care to, um, seeing the connections between emotional health and physical health and how do we go about changing that?



Vivek Murthy (22:59):

Yeah, that's a critical question. And because it goes beyond loneliness as you're alluding to Olga, right? It's just deeper. It's a discomfort, I think is what it is that many clinicians have with thinking about our emotional wellbeing is being connected to health. And I think that some of that comes from a long history of thinking about the body, the mind, and our emotions very separately in silos. Uh, even though the research increasingly tells us how deeply connected they are, that's where that term, that we've all heard, uh, that says it's all in your head comes from, right? It's almost, it's a pejorative way of saying that your symptoms are in your head and hence they're less important. Whereas we now realize that what is in your head has a profound impact what's on your body, but I do think I'll go there. This is starting to shift.

Vivek Murthy (23:48):

It's shifting with the new generation of nurses and doctors who recognize that powerful connections between our, our, our heart, our head and the rest of our body. It's shifting because of a growing body of research, including the research on loneliness. That's telling us that there is in fact, a connection between our emotional state and how we feel, and even on biological markers that indicate disease or wellness. And what we have to start doing now is figuring out how to translate that growing recognition into practice. So what does it mean now, or what should it mean? If you're a doctor encountering a patient who's struggling with loneliness, what's your responsibility there? How can you identify loneliness in that patient? How can you connect them to the right resources so that they can get support and help? Those are the questions that medical schools and hospitals and nursing schools need to start grappling with.

Vivek Murthy (24:41):

And my hope is that. And part of the reason I wrote this book, as I, I want to say accelerate a more global conversation on how we address loneliness and really recognizing it's not just one of many other illnesses that we have to think about. And in fact, it's not an illness at all. It's a natural state of being that all of us experience, but I do believe that social connection is an extraordinarily powerful resource for our healing. I've realized in the research I've done in the writing of this book, that our social connection enables us to live healthier lives, to perform better in school and in the workplace. It augments our level of fulfillment. It is in many ways, the force multiplier that we often look for in our lives. And we have some many times taking that for granted, just because it's been around for a long time. So we tend to get fascinated with new medicines and new medical technology, thinking about the improvement it can make in our health. While we forget about the tool that we have had for millennia, which is a power of our relationships and it's time for us to re-center ourselves on relationships to build the people centered life and people centered society that I think we were designed to live in the first place, but that we are called to reclaim now,

Olga Khazan (25:56):

Um, final question from the audience here in interesting one, given these times, um, how do we help young children cope with and make meaning of loneliness, especially given the limits on their social interactions with others, um, currently with childcare and preschool and things like that, being shut down for the time being,

Vivek Murthy (26:14):



I just, this is such a good question. And I, I say this, having two kids, myself who are three and two, and we, we struggle at times to figure out how to explain the pandemic to them and explained to them why they're not able to see their friends. My, we were just doing music class, uh, a couple of days ago. Um, you know, before the long weekend with my, my two kids and my it's a music class that we'd normally be in person attending. And my son who's three looked over at me. Then you just said,

Vivek Murthy (26:44):

As he looked at all the other kids on the screen, he said, Papa, we can't see all of them because of Corona virus. Right. And I just broke my heart because, you know, he just, they both love seeing other children. And I know many of our kids are in the same spot. Um, I think there are a couple of things that are really important as we think about this moment though. One is to recognize that, um, this stress of this moment, and there is a tremendous amount of stress affects all of us at all ages. It just because children may not show it the transition and the upheaval in their own lives will just manifest in different ways. And some kids, it may be that they act out more than others. Their sleep may be disturbed. Others may have may regress in terms of their potty training, their all kinds of different ways in which this manifests in children.

Vivek Murthy (27:30):

But what is important, I think right now is for us to make sure that we are doubling down on the quality of time that we are spending with our children. Even if we have less time to spend with our kids, making it count by being fully present with them has never been more important because that is a grounding force in the lives of our children. The second thing that's important is to recognize that our, as somebody told me before we had our first child, uh, is, is a good friend who told me your kids may not listen to what you say, but they will listen to what you do. And our kids do look at us and learn by example, uh, whether we like that or not. And so to the extent that we can model a people centered life by prioritizing time with friends and with family, by checking on neighbors who may be struggling, uh, by reaching out to a friend who may be having a hard time, we set a positive example for them too.

Vivek Murthy (28:23):

And we can also encourage them to do the same. I've seen very encouraging stories of, of young people who are actually getting together with friends to find ways to serve those who are in need in their community, whether that's making masks for people or delivering meals to them. Um, these acts of service, which, you know, are powerful antidote to loneliness were especially powerful when we do them together with others. And that's a powerful way that we can help our kids find ways to feel and experience connection in this difficult time. So I know that our time is, uh, has come to a close. Um, I wish we had more time for questions, but I do want to say that Olga, one of the reasons that I have found this topic to be so compelling, uh, and I say that because you can you hear the word loneliness and you think, gosh, is that going to be a dark topic? But I began the book writing about loneliness, but I ended the book fascinated by the power

Speaker 5 (29:18):

Of human connection. It has

Vivek Murthy (29:20):

Struck me again and again, in listening to the stories of people I met along the way, uh, whether it was the woman I met in Dallas, uh, who has created these there's something called a friendship table where

she brings people together for meals once a month, all over her neighborhood, or whether it was Serena. The college student I met who created it was a D you know, in an introvert, we had a hard time meeting people in college, but created these, uh, events called space gatherings, where people could come and show up and be vulnerable and open and force strong connection. As I've seen and heard these extraordinary stories, I've been reminded that one social connection is an extraordinary resource that many of us lose sight of it, but to social connection as well, how we're wired and the movement to live a more connected life.

Vivek Murthy (30:09):

It's not an effort to transform us into something. We're not, it's an effort to return us to who we are and have always been for thousands. And thousands of years, two beings were interconnected who depend on each other who need each other. And there is no shame in that. In fact, there is much to be gained in, in recognizing that I do worry when I think about my kids and many of our kids that we are raising our children. And so often in a society that tells them that relying on other people as a sign of weakness, and that tells them that their worth as human beings is tied to their ability to be successful, which often means their ability to acquire money or fame or power. But I believe what we have to remind our kids of, as we remind ourselves to build a people's center life is that their worth as human beings is grounded in something much more intrinsic, which is their ability to give and to receive love.

Vivek Murthy (31:10):

That is where their worth as human being comes from. And that's true for us as well. And the most tangible way that we experienced that love is through relationships. That's why our relationships are a source of affirmation. They're our source of grounding and meaning, and our greatest source of joy. They're the touchstone that we returned to during difficult moments. And so my hope coming out of all of this, my simple credo for this book is just three words. It's put people first. And my hope is as I move forward in my own life and think about how to create a meaningful life for myself and set an example for my kids, uh, is to try to think about how to live, make people the priority in my decision making about where I put my time, energy and effort. And if we do that collectively, then we will start to build a people centered society, where we design curriculum in schools, just try and think connection where we design workplaces, just strengthen relationships, where we even think on a public policy level about the impact that our policies have on community and connection and that kind of people-centered world.

Vivek Murthy (32:18):

That's the kind of world where I believe all of us

Tricia Johnson (32:21):

And our children will thrive beautifully said. Um, well, thank you so much for Vic and thanks everyone for joining us. Thank you, Olga. The VEC mercy served as the 19th surgeon general of the United States. He's a physician and his latest book is together. The healing power of connection in a sometimes lonely world. Olga Cazan writes for the Atlantic. She's the author of weird, the power of being an outsider and an insider world. Their conversation was part of the 2020 series held by Aspen ideas, help Make sure to subscribe to Aspen ideas, to go wherever you listen to podcasts, follow Aspen ideas year round on Twitter and Facebook at Aspen ideas, today's show was produced by Marcy [inaudible] and me and programmed by the Aspen ideas health team. Our music is by Wanderly I'm Trisha Johnson. Thanks for joining me.

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Speaker 6 ([33:24](#)):

[inaudible].