

**"ENCEPHALOS" ASSOCIATION  
ONE-DAY CONVENTION**

**On "Loneliness"**

*Date: Friday, 9 May 2014*

**Summaries of Speaker Presentations**

**Opening Speech by Dr. Ekaterini Divoli**

Chairman of the Encephalos Association

Publisher of the Encephalos Journal

The Encephalos Journal was first published in 1950 by three prominent scientists, A. Hatzidemos, F. Skouras and M. Strigaris. The period between 1960 and 1990 the journal was published by the Hellenic Neurologic-Psychiatric Association. In 1990, the association was divided into two entirely distinct domains: Neurology and Psychiatry. During that period, a team of doctors, headed by M. Strigaris, founded the Encephalos Association and continued the publication of the journal.

Hit by the Greek economic crisis, the Encephalos journal's quarterly publication ceased in 2012. Nevertheless, the following activities still continue to take place:

- Over the last 15 years, the journal has been available online at **www.encephalos.gr**.
- In the memory of the educator, Dr. Evaggelia Divoli, a scholarship is granted to medical students, with the funds donated by her family. As for from now, the scholarship will be granted by the "Aikaterini and Evaggelia Charitable Organization" which was founded a year ago.
- An educational program consisting of one-day conventions.

Today's convention addresses the topic "Loneliness".

**Alone - Loneliness: a multidimensional subject.**

Loneliness is an unpleasant emotional feeling, usually (but not always) experienced by a person **alone**. Most often, loneliness is thought to be an unusual or a relatively rare experience in a person's daily life but something inevitable and fatal for the elderly.

However, loneliness remains an experience inextricably linked with a person's life.

Despite the fact that man is a social being, he alone processes the world, he alone determines how he experiences his environment, what he can perceive and integrate and finally what he learns. He alone decides what kind of experiences and activities he will engage in. The way he will develop and, eventually, how he will evolve and progress in life is entirely up to him. The simple and the most crucial decisions in a person's life in terms of activities, companions, friendships, the present and the future are made by himself alone.

The fact is that on numerous occasions loneliness may be desired and sought after, as it allows the individual to concentrate and create.

On other occasions, a person is led to loneliness against his will and it is this form of loneliness that regards to:

- Individuals who rank high up in the hierarchy.
- Individuals with very high IQ and/or special skills.
- Individuals surrounded by a crowd of people.

This might be explained by the lack of, or inadequate, or non-desirable communication.

On the whole, "a man is born alone and dies alone". A person cannot remember being born nor can he have any recollection of his death.

### **Loneliness. Current scientific data.**

Nikos C. Zygouris

Doctor of Clinical Neuropsychology, University of Thessaly.

Argyris V. Karapetsas

Professor of Neuropsychology – Neurolinguistics , University of Thessaly.

#### **Summary**

The Children's Depression Inventory (CDI) for children aged 7 – 17 was devised by Kovacs on the basis of Beck Depression Inventory. The scale's assumption is that childhood depression can be described through the same symptoms as adult depression. Sadness or depressed mood, sense of guilt, anhedonia, low self – esteem, sleeping and eating problems, excessive fatigue, psychomotor delay, loneliness and suicidal ideas. The main aim of the present study was to evaluate loneliness as it can be measured through the CDI in a population of children with emotional disorders

### **Internet addiction as a major factor in the expansion of the phenomenon of adolescent loneliness. Prevention and treatment methods.**

Apostolos J. Fotis

Phd. candidate of Clinical Neuropsychology, University of Thessaly.

Argyris V. Karapetsas

Professor of Neuropsychology – Neurolinguistics , University of Thessaly.

#### **Summary**

Internet addiction has lately become an omnipresent and alarming problem in Greece as well as around the world. Internet addiction is a new kind of mental disorder resulting from excessive use of the internet as it interacts with everyday life. The fact that teenagers have not created yet critical thinking , places them at high risk of addiction to the internet .Moreover, internet addiction creates many problems in the field of psychological health to adolescents, and their families . There have been many studies indicating that pathological Internet use is directly related to mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. Furthermore the internet addiction teenagers usually feel loneliness. The definition of loneliness refers to a feeling of abandonment of the person by the around people whether it really exists , whether the person is experiencing this situation as a subjective reality that does not exist objectively. Although internet as a tool enables continuous communication between users by eliminating geographical, temporal and social norms, pathological use is directly related to loneliness. The study of the Neuropsychology Laboratory of the University of Thessaly, shows the correlation of internet addiction and loneliness , as well as methods about the prevention and treatment of them.

### **Psychic void in borderline disorder**

Constantine Papacostantinou, Psychiatrist-Psychoanalyst

#### **Summary**

Psychic void is a characteristic experience of patients suffered from borderline disorder but it appears also in “normal” persons who have borderline personality traits or are facing stress conditions. It concerns a defensive mechanism of the psyche which strongly affects the psychic functions of the person like thought and mood as well as his general behavior. As a result the person gets isolated socially or engaged in superficial relationships. In any case he experiences intense loneliness but he is unable mentally for a different choice.

## **“Coping with Loneliness through music”.**

Irini Rodopi M. Laskaraki,

PhD Candidate, member of Laboratory of Neuropsychology, University of Thessaly.

Argyris V. Karapetsas

Professor of Neuropsychology – Neurolinguistics , University of Thessaly.

### **Summary**

Loneliness can be defined as a personal feeling of a lack - absence of meaningful human relationships, thus, is a negative feeling and is related to the occurrence of depressive symptoms. This state is a crucial risk factor for human health that can impair both physical and mental health. Social and emotional isolation impairs the quality of life. Music can act as a mood regulator, thus enhancing the person who feels alone. Musical experiences affect the emotional state, altering emotions and mood. Music has the potential to change, maintain and enhance mood, while provides solace, acting as a comforting friend. Music listening is an effective means for mood regulation, relaxation and emotional self-regulation. Music helps adolescents to regulate and express their feelings and emotions, while serve as a means for the elderly to express their emotions and reduce their loneliness. Participation in a choir, singing and listening to music provide joy, enjoyment, experiences of togetherness, company, moments that give meaning to life. Moreover, significant research data derived from the field of music therapy, as complementary therapy. Everyone has a unique musical past, while the ability to create and correspond to or feel music maintains irrespective of impairment, disease or other damage. In music therapy sessions, music is the medium for communication. During the receptive (listening to music) or active (improvisation, playing instruments, lyric-writing, singing) individual or group music therapy sessions, music activities provide opportunities for sharing feelings and common experiences, alleviating loneliness, setting the ground for Self-realization, thus, gaining a deep sense and awareness of self and finally change the way of one's life.

### **Loneliness and its association with stress and psychopathology**

**Theletis Christos, Psychiatrist**

#### **Summary**

Loneliness could be defined as a subjective experience in which a person feels psychological discomfort because he/she is unable to increase the quality and/or quantity of relationships to the person's desired level. Loneliness occurs following a perceived lack of and/or loss of significant relationships and can contribute to several physical and psychological health problems. Populations at risk for loneliness include the elderly, young college students, the seriously ill, the disabled, those who experience significant loss, and those who are isolated like the psychiatric patients. Specially, people presenting with psychological problems often experience social stigmatization and isolation.

Since the patient may be reluctant to express loneliness, all the parties involved in patient's care (physicians, mental health professionals, caregivers, family members) ought to look for the possible risk factors for loneliness, including age (elderly, young adult), recent relocation, recent death of significant other, gradual loss of important relationships over time, disabilities (intellectual or physical), serious illness, depression and other psychiatric disorders. Finally, psychological support of people suffering from loneliness may prevent further deterioration of their physical and mental health.

### **Loneliness and suicidality**

**Dr. Athanassios Douzenis: Associate Professor in Psychiatry- Forensic Psychiatry, Second Psychiatry Department, Athens University Medical School**

#### **Summary**

Suicide is an important public mortality factor and is associated with high psychiatric morbidity. Loneliness is a subjective feeling associated directly with alienation and isolation. In the current social and economic climate the loosening of family and social ties in general and the reduction in the sense of “community” and “being part of” (belonging) are associated with an increase in suicides. Suicide has also been associated with self-injurious behaviours such as substance abuse and self-harm episodes. This presentation will analyse the relationship of loneliness and social isolation with suicide. An increase in sociability,

communication and sense of community and belonging is associated with reduced self-harming behaviours. Best practices are described as well as supportive interventions for which there is evidence of effectiveness.

## **Loneliness and Adolescence**

### **Study on a small sample of the Community of Volos**

Gkrougia Maria: Social Worker Support Center for ROMA and for Vulnerable Groups of K.E.K.P.A.-D.I.E.K. A Benefit Undertaking of the municipality of Volos

#### **Summary**

In the present study, we investigated the loneliness of adolescents, how they experience it personally and in relation to the family, in a small random sample of adolescents (17 girls and 7 boys, aged 11 to 19 years) who participated in activities of the Youth Center of Municipality of Nea Ionia of Magnesia. The teens surveyed have good communication with their parents and positive communication with their peers. They listen to music alone and only the 8% consider themselves as lonely. The vast majority considers the feeling of loneliness as negative and the 56% of adolescents do not consider loneliness as a way to confront their problems. As consequences of loneliness adolescents mention melancholy, dealing with themselves and depression. Regarding the gender, the girls consider themselves as being lonelier, the same happens with the boys. Age, education level of respondents, and age and occupation of their parents, seems not to be associated with the emergence of loneliness. For the majority of adolescents, loneliness means isolation. In order to deal with loneliness the teenagers think that they should have friends, and communication with their own family members, also not to be isolated.

## **Loneliness in the City: Social Networks and Their Applications**

**Dr. Gregory Katsas**

#### **Summary**

Loneliness is one of the significant and negative impacts of modern life and is a result of large and abrupt structural changes in social organization. While loneliness can be analyzed as an individual and as a social problem, this presentation focuses on the social context of understanding loneliness. In particular, it refers to loneliness in the city since cities concentrate a larger number of the population, are considered impersonal and can lead to alienation and as such to loneliness. Nevertheless, the argument of alienation, although powerful, is not absolute. The city can become a carrier of social integration of people just because of its size. The central argument of the presentation is that the city as a geographical and social area creates and maintains social networks that help reduce loneliness. Using a critical approach without conclusive arguments, this paper analyzes this position further and explores its application to various population groups.