

BROADCAST-Parents feel the loneliness epidemic

ANCHOR LEAD-IN

Recent research shows that two-thirds of parents surveyed felt the demands of parenthood sometimes or frequently made them feel lonely and isolated. The study results were followed by a US surgeon general advisory about a parental loneliness and burnout crisis across the country. So what can be done? An OSF HealthCare behavioral health expert weighs in.

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Dr. Kyle Boerke of OSF HealthCare says the pandemic forced parents into additional roles. On top of that, he says social media is contributing.

"It's very clear the anxiety, depression, loneliness that people feel – it's literally a one-to-one correspondence. Increase in social media use ... increase in anxiety and depression. It's a one-to-one correspondence." (:12)

Morgan Hurtado, a mother of three boys in Bloomington, has felt the loneliness because her husband works second shift. When asked to reflect on her relationships, Hurtado realized her mom was her closest friend and she realized the need to make a change.

"Something I'm trying in my personal life as sort of an experiment if you will, is to limit my social media interactions or just limit my time as a whole on social media, forcing me to have those in-person interactions more often and maybe leading to new relationships, friendships." (:27)

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Dr. Boerke recommends joining a group that meets regularly in-person such as a book club and look to neighbors for regular engagement such as meet-ups for walking a few times a week.