

Welcome to the UC San Diego Center for Healthy Aging and the Sam and Rose Stein Institute for Research on Aging e-newsletter!

## Aging, Memory, and Social Connection Study

by Barton Palmer & Allison Williams

There has been rising interest in the lay press and professional journals about the “epidemic of loneliness.” On one hand, the capacity to experience acute loneliness is likely a very adaptive characteristic, and there are some data consistent with the idea that this capacity has been favored by natural selection. Specifically, acute loneliness can serve as a social motivating signal that increases the individual’s drive to reach out and connect with others in ways that can be beneficial for survival and reproduction. However, very much analogous to the distinction between acute vs. chronic pain, while the capacity to feel acute loneliness can foster survival, chronic loneliness can become a problem for health and well-being.

A number of studies have found that people experiencing chronic loneliness and social isolation are at greater risk for a range of medical conditions, including increased risk of memory and other cognitive concerns, and possible dementia. The causes or mechanisms underlying such associations are not yet fully known, but some candidates being evaluated include direct biological ones such as the biological effects of sustained stress responses from chronic loneliness, and indirect ones such as the effects of social isolation on health behaviors and health-related resources.

Among the questions that remain about the association of loneliness and cognitive concerns is whether there might be adaptive patterns of acute loneliness that can be identified to help persons experiencing chronic loneliness. For example, are there helpful responses to acute loneliness that might be taught to persons prone to chronic loneliness? If so, a second question would be whether learning those adaptive responses can reduce subsequent risk of transitioning from mild cognitive concerns to dementia. Dr. Barton Palmer and his team are currently conducting an initial investigation regarding the first part of these questions. Specifically, they are interested in identifying adaptive and maladaptive patterns of loneliness with daily assessments over the course of several weeks among adults with mild cognitive impairment. They are also examining the association of levels and patterns of loneliness to current cognitive performance, and to some “biomarkers” that

# Aging, Memory, & Social Connection Study

with Barton Palmer & Allison Williams

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## *We are looking...*

- for people between the ages of 51-90 years
- experiencing mild cognitive concerns without substantial impairment in daily functioning.

## *Participation in this study...*

- Takes place over the course of a month
- **Involves two in-person visits**
  - (clinical interview of mental health history, measures of memory, concentration, and other thinking skills, questionnaires regarding loneliness and social connection, as well as measures of feelings of depression, anxiety, and positive and negative feelings)
- **A blood-draw**
  - (about 2 tablespoons) for blood-based measures related to our study questions.
- **Participants will be lent a smartphone** on which they will complete twice-daily smartphone surveys for a month
- **A Fitbit device**, that will help us identify patterns of loneliness and physical activity to better understand how people respond to feelings of loneliness.
- **May be compensated up to \$310.**

If you are interested participating in or learning more about this study, please contact the study coordinator, Allison Williams, via phone at (858) 412-7560 or via email at [apw010@ucsd.edu](mailto:apw010@ucsd.edu).

[Email Alison](#)

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**Osher Lifelong Learning Institute**  
**Upcoming Events**

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**July 8th at 10am**

# Summer 2023 Open House

Learn about the highly acclaimed UC San Diego Osher Lifelong Learning Institute: a membership program for individuals 50 years of age and older who are interested in pursuing intellectual interests and enriching their lives through lifelong learning. Join us for this Open House experience to learn about the upcoming quarter classes and seminars (which will be offered on campus and streamed LIVE online via Zoom), the benefits of membership, and meet the volunteer leadership team. You can attend on campus in person or join us virtually via Zoom. RSVP below to receive additional instructions and the Zoom link.

[RSVP here](#)

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**July 8th at 2pm**  
**at Park & Market Guggenheim Theatre**

## Gustavo Romero Plays Franz

### Schubert

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UC San Diego is pleased to sponsor the renowned concert pianist Gustavo Romero for a special one-hour concert featuring two piano sonatas by the Austrian composer Franz Schubert (1797-1828). The concert will be followed by a reception with light refreshments.



[Register Here](#)

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**Don't forget to register for our next**  
**Public Lecture Series**  
**Barton W. Palmer, PhD on Wednesday, July 26th**



Barton W. Palmer, PhD  
Professor, Psychiatry

# Save the Date PUBLIC LECTURE

## "WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT HOW TO FOSTER MENTAL WELLBEING AS WE AGE?"

Please join us for a talk with Professor of  
Psychiatry, Barton W. Palmer, PhD.  
Q & A to follow.

🕒 4-5pm

📅 Wed July 26

📍 Zoom

[Register Here!](#)



## We Need Your Support!

When you give to the UC San Diego Center for Healthy Aging and the Stein Institute for Research on Aging, you're making the decision to support **the pursuit of a healthier, longer life for you and your loved ones**. Please **make a gift** to help sustain and expand our successful aging programs.

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