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Losing our touch: A closer look at our changing communities and their effects on our relationships

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Our societies are changing. Communities are becoming more fluid and less dependent on locations and ideas, but as they transform their members lose the intimacy that they once shared. Whether the alterations are due to economic fluctuations, technological advancements, cultural norms, or societal pressures, these new communities are often not as effective in providing humans with stable opportunities to form relationships. Relationships are necessary for an individual's survival; without them, the chances of premature death and other health risks drastically increase. Two of the most potent health risks are loneliness and isolation. Both loneliness and isolation reinforce the negative consequences of our more fluid communities by secluding individuals from one another and dissuading them from communicating with each other. In this thesis, I examine these patterns through five hypothetical case studies involving people of various ages and life stories supported by studies on loneliness and isolation by researchers like Jo Griffin and Julianne Holt-Lunstad. Though my research mainly focuses on the effects of changing communities in America, the unhealthy impacts of loneliness and isolation can affect any age group anywhere around the world. In addition to exploring how loneliness and isolation influence people's relationships, I also suggest a reexamined model of living, cohousing, that incorporates many of the elements that our current, fluid communities lack.

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