

Robert Hagan, 1 June 2016

# Older People & Loneliness: Truths and Myths

# Today's Message

## Loneliness

- **Definitions & messages from research**
- **Lifecourse perspectives**
- **Older people and loneliness**

Author(s)	Definition
<b>Killeen (1998)</b>	A discrepancy between one's emotional and/or social needs and wants and the reality of their social experience
<b>Wood (1986)</b>	A sense of lacking someone with whom to share personal experiences
<b>Baumeister &amp; Leary (1995)</b>	Not so much a lack of social contact as a lack of intimate connections

Negative aloneness

Positive aloneness



**Alienation**



**Loneliness**



**Social  
Isolation**



**Aloneness**



**Solitude**

# Loneliness

Social

Emotional

Social  
Isolation

Theory:

## Cognitive Discrepancy

### Social loneliness

Less contact with friends

Poorer health

Rural location

Greater age

Lower income

Theory:

## Attachment

### Emotional Loneliness

Widowhood, divorce or separation

*after Drennan et al (2008)*

## Chronic

More than two years in length

Associated with personality traits e.g shyness, neuroticism, highly critical

The 'unhealthy paradox'

## Situational

Typically sparked by an event

Night-times and weekends

Times previously associated with activity

## Chronic

More than two years in length

Associated with personality traits e.g shyness, neuroticism, highly critical

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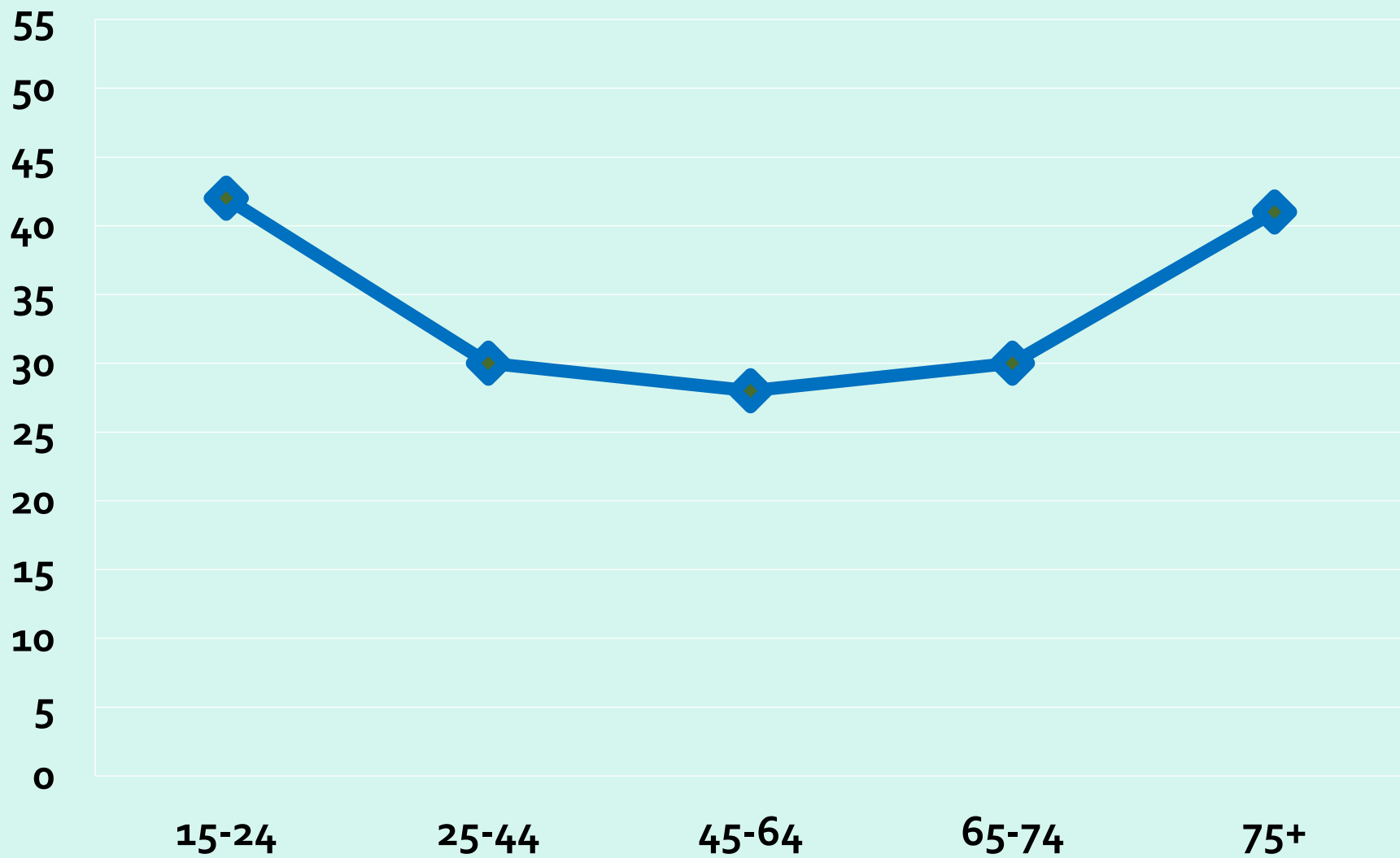
## Situational

**Typically sparked by an event**

**Night-times and weekends**

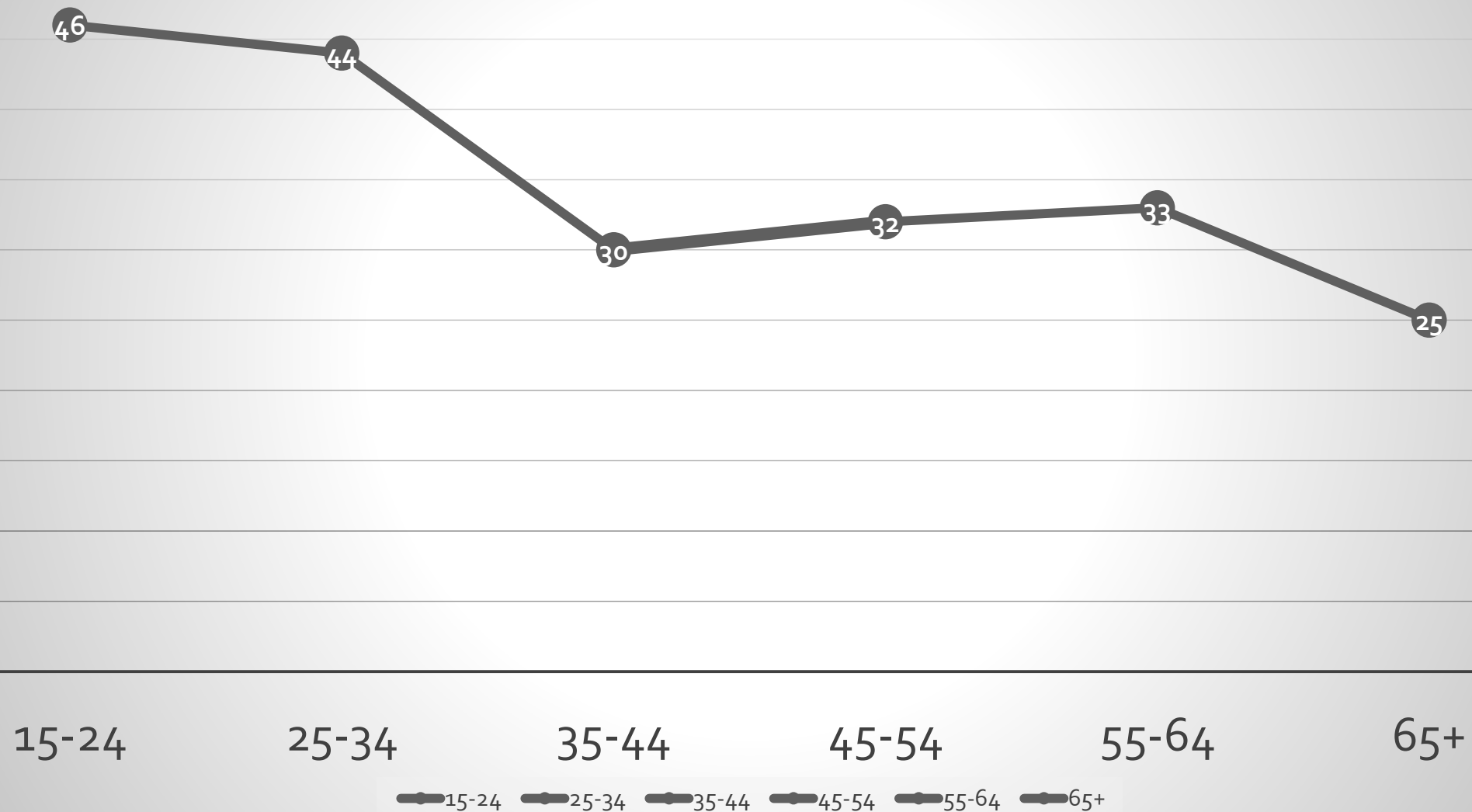
**Times previously associated with activity**





*Loneliness throughout the life course*

Fears about loneliness in later life by age group



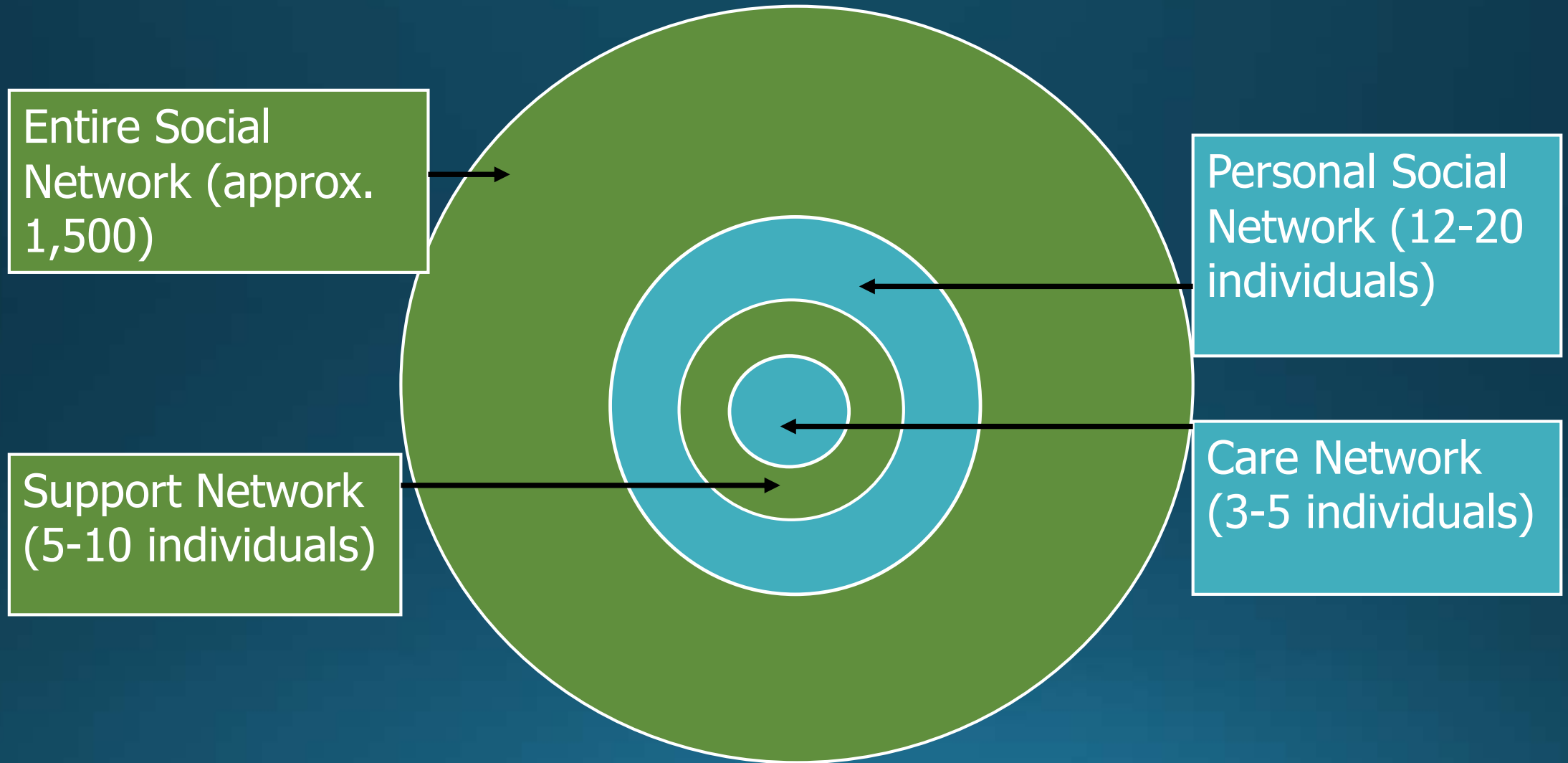
# Prevalence of loneliness in later life

	Often/Always (%)	Sometimes/ Moderately (%)	Never/ Seldom (%)
Townsend (1954)	9	25	66
Dahlberg & McKee (2004)	8	38	54
Wenger (2004)	9	29	63
Victor (2005)	7	31	61
Steed et al (2007)	7	32	62
Molloy et al (2010)	15	27	58
La Grow et al (2012)	8	44	48
Victor & Bowling (2012)	9	30	61
Nyqvist et al (2013)	11	37	52
Ferreira-Alves et al (2014)	12	26	62

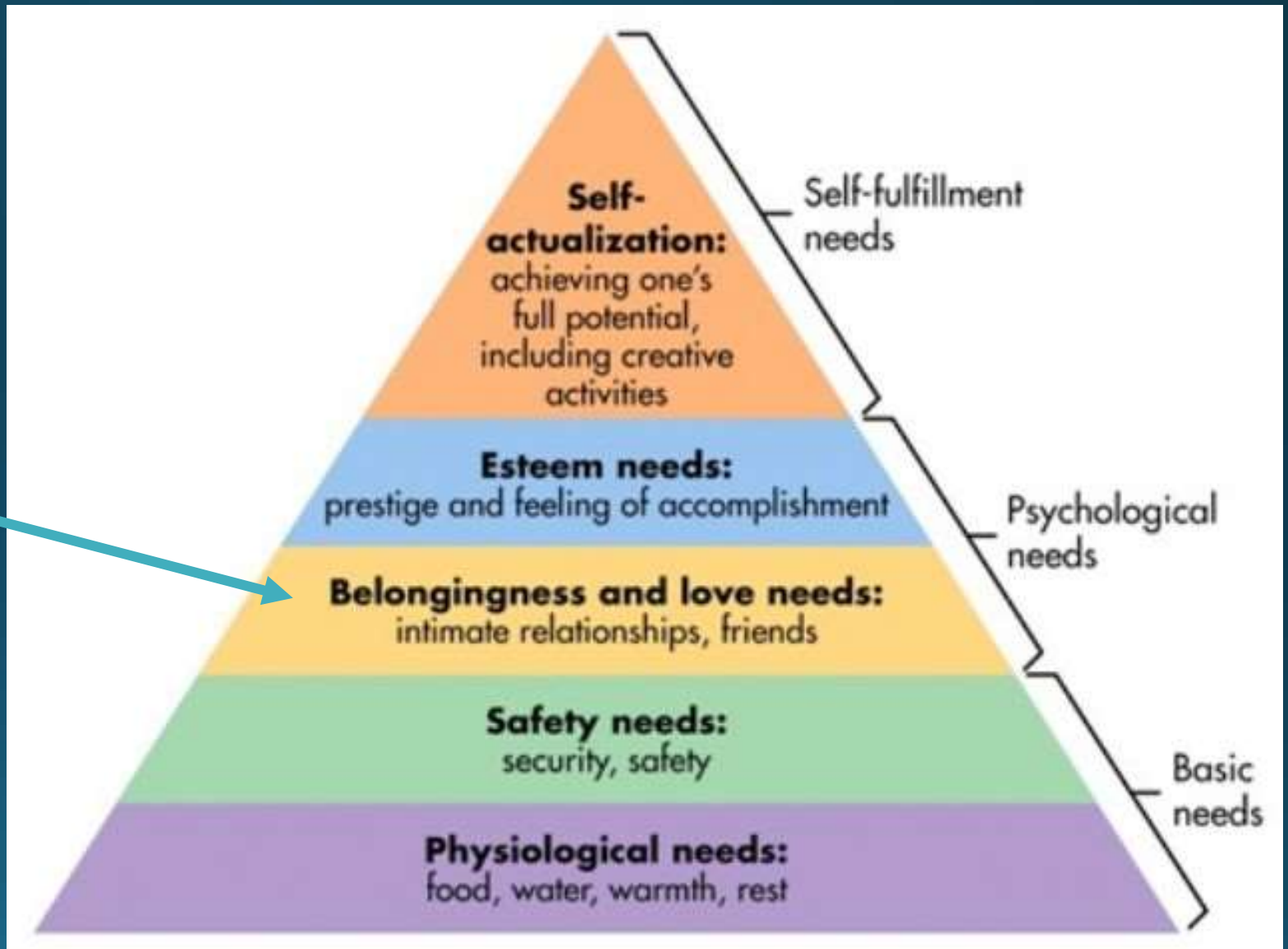
# Life Stage Differences







Loneliness?



Evolutionary  
Theory

Loneliness?

