



Let's tackle *loneliness* together



About loneliness

Loneliness is something that can affect us all at any point in our lives. It can mean different things to different people. But loneliness is a general sense of isolation or disconnection from other people, or a feeling that we are lacking or missing social interactions and relationships. Loneliness can have a negative impact on our mental health, especially if we have been experiencing it for a long time. Some studies suggest that loneliness is associated with an increased risk of certain mental health problems including depression, anxiety and stress. It can also lead to a low self-esteem, disengagement, demotivation, as well as various negative emotions, thoughts, and beliefs.



“Loneliness is deeply within the mind and it’s just the feeling that there is nobody (...)”

- [Sally](#)

Why do we feel lonely?

Loneliness can be caused by various factors, which vary from person to person. These can include:

interpersonal engagement, e.g., having no family or friends, being estranged from them or the quality of the relationship with people around us

certain life events such as bereavement, divorce, relationship break-up, retirement, changing jobs, moving to a new town or country without family or friends, having a baby, etc.

social environment and personal circumstances, e.g., living alone, community connectedness, being a carer for someone, living on a low income, language barriers, experiencing discrimination and stigma because of gender, race or sexual orientation

physical and mental health like reduced mobility, chronic conditions, cognitive and sensory impairment. According to *Sense*, half of disabled people are lonely, and one in four feel lonely every day.

How does it feel to be lonely?

Loneliness can cause us to feel empty, alone, and unwanted.

“I feel like nobody needs me” “I feel like I don’t really exist”

“I feel like I’m not important to anyone”

“I feel numb when I feel lonely”*

Listen to [The Kind Place](#) podcast series to see how people experiencing loneliness feel like and what they are doing to get through it. You can also watch [Less of a Lonely Place](#) video featuring the voices of people from across the UK talking about their personal experiences of loneliness

*Mental Health Foundation

Tackling loneliness



“Our connection to other people and our community is fundamental to protecting our mental health so we much find better ways of tackling the epidemic of loneliness. We can all play a part in this.”

- [Mark Rowland, Chief Executive of the Mental Health Foundation](#)

Loneliness is a reality for way too many people in our society today – [a study by The Co-op and the British Red Cross](#) reveals that over 9 million people in the UK across all adult ages are either **always** or **often** lonely.

So how can we tackle the issue of loneliness?

It may be difficult to start to deal with the feelings of loneliness or isolation, especially if you don't know where or how to start. But there are some ways you could start to build those relationships and connections into your life. Help yourself and those around you too!

Keep in touch with those around you

Stay in touch with your friends, family and neighbours. Talk to them regularly to see how they are and tell them how you're feeling. Hearing someone's voice can make a big difference to how you feel. Whether you choose to meet up in person, or chat on the phone, via video calls or on social media, all contact can help remind you that you are not alone. Regular catch ups offer an opportunity to build up a support network. Everyone needs to feel they have a support system and being listened to can help you to feel less isolated. And this works the other way round too!

Reconnect

Did you used to enjoy spending time with someone, but you have drifted apart for no specific reason and haven't met in a while? You may feel that it can be a bit awkward reconnecting with an old friend, but grab a phone and send them a message, have a video call or arrange the meeting. They might be missing you too and be very pleased to hear from you!



Socialise with colleagues

Do you usually spend lunchtime on your own scrolling through your phone? If yes, then instead grab a lunch with your teammates in a nearby café or go for a walk and have a friendly chat. Break down the barriers of work-related topics and get to know your colleagues on a personal level by learning about their interests outside of work, like their family or big life events coming up. It will help you to connect with them and create a more meaningful relationships.



Try befriending

Befriending is a simple way of connecting with others, which can be a big help – both for you and your befriender. You could try one of these [befriending services](#), which provide opportunities for social interaction and aim to reduce loneliness and isolation through regular phone calls or meet-ups in the community. Find a befriender or become one!

Keep an eye on local events

Stay on the lookout for local community events – these can be a great opportunity to spend time with others and meet some new people. [Nextdoor](#) is a great way to find out what is happening in your local area. You could also have a look at [MeetUpMondays™](#) - the campaign aiming to strengthen communities by running free, weekly coffee mornings at cafes and pubs across the UK. Check out if there's one in your area!

Join a group

Join a class or group based on your hobbies and interests. Being part of an offline or online group is a fantastic way of meeting new people and making connections. Think about activities that you would like to try out and look for groups and clubs centred around these. Also, once you join the group, remember to be welcoming to any newcomers and look for opportunities to involve them in the conversation, especially those who may be lacking confidence. You may want to find some groups and local events on [Meetup](#).

Volunteer

Volunteering is a great way to get a chance of meeting new people and making friends, socialising with others, as well as getting to know the local community. And you can make a difference to the lives of others too! To find the right volunteering role, you can go to your local volunteer centre or visit one of the following websites: [Dolt](#), [Volunteering Matters](#), or [Reach Volunteering](#).



Getting support

Are you feeling lonely?

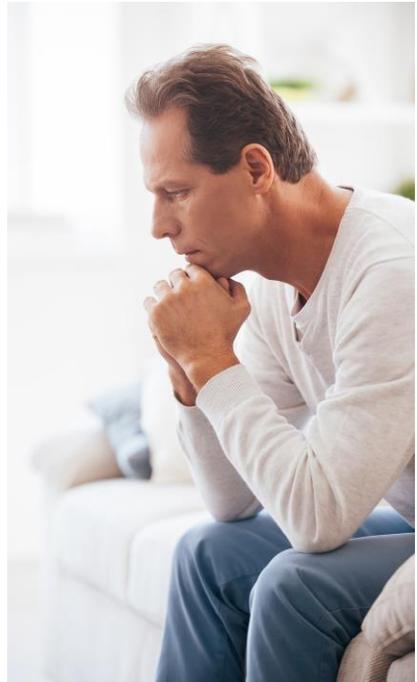
If you feel that there's nobody that you can talk to, there are many charities that can support you. Their trained volunteers are there to talk with you and to help you find ways to move forward. Calls and webchats are free, anonymous, non-judgemental and confidential.

[Sunshine Charity](#) – a charity aiming to fight the battle against loneliness and social isolation. You can contact them on the phone (0333 335 5049) or via live chat.

[CALM](#) - you can talk to someone at CALM by calling them on 0800 58 58 58 or using their webchat.

[British Red Cross](#) – it can provide emotional support in more than 200 languages. You can call their support line on 0808 196 3651.

[Samaritans](#) – if you have been experiencing loneliness for a long time and you are struggling to cope, call Samaritans on 116 123 or send an email to jo@samaritans.org.



More information

Podcast series

[Loneliness Explored](#) by Campaign to End Loneliness - each episode looks at an aspect of loneliness whether it is bereavement, communities, conversations and psychology.

[Talking 24 – Loneliness](#) by NHS24 - in this episode of Talking 24, Dr Laura Ryan and Tony McLaren speak about their own experiences of loneliness, the effect it had on their physical and mental health, and discuss what we can do help those around us who may be suffering.

Recorded webinars

[Talking Therapies: Loneliness](#) by NHS Talking Therapies Havering IAPT

Booklets

[Loneliness](#) by Mind - explains loneliness, giving practical suggestions for what you can do and where you can go for support

[Self help guide to Loneliness and Isolation](#) by NHS Humber Teaching – has helpful tips and advice to combat loneliness and isolation.

Campaigns

[Campaign to End Loneliness](#)

References

[Marmalade Trust](#)

[Mind](#)

[Campaign to End Loneliness](#)

[NHS](#)

[British Red Cross](#)

[Sunshine Charity](#)



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