

## Loneliness

Loneliness can occur when alone, but also when in a relationship or when surrounded by other people. Most of us have a strong desire for companionship and the lack of feeling connected to others can be a painful experience.

Below are strategies to cope with feelings of loneliness and tips to build meaningful social connections.

### Tips for Coping with Loneliness

Loneliness and isolation can be painful, but there are many ways to cope. Consider what may be contributing to your feelings of loneliness.

- **Consider using virtual communication** to stay connected with your close friends and family. This is useful whether they live close by or far away for easier connection, but it's particularly beneficial if you've recently relocated and are physically separated from those people.
- **Identify opportunities to build new relationships and connections.** This will not only provide companionship but also give you a greater sense of belonging.
- **Work on building your self-esteem.** For some people, feelings of loneliness may stem from low self-esteem, or a tendency to have negative or defeating self-thoughts. Challenging negative thoughts about your relationships with others.
- **Consider seeking support from a qualified mental health counsellor** who can help you with your well-being goals. This will be beneficial if you are not sure what is contributing to your feelings of loneliness or are finding it hard to build meaningful and fulfilling relationships with others.

### Tips to Strengthen Your Relationships with Others

Loneliness is tied to the quality of your relationships, not their quantity. To that end, here are a few tips to help build and strengthen your current connections with the people in your life:

1. Be yourself.
2. Respect people's boundaries.
3. Stay focused on the present.
4. Take part in the conversation.
5. Be genuine with your admiration.
6. Be a good listener.
7. Set a daily goal of contacting at least one person in your social circle.
8. Be inventive in finding ways to connect. Call, text, email or arrange a video call.
9. Arrange time with others. You don't have to wait for others to arrange something first. Keep it simple and affordable if needed such as a walk or hike, meeting up for coffee, baking together, etc.

## Tips for Making New Social Connections

While it is important to maintain the current relationships you have, identifying opportunities to build new relationships can help alleviate feelings of loneliness as you expand your social circle. Below are a few tips to help you make new social connections.

1. Join a club/group: Consider joining a community group to meet new people and engage in shared interests. This can be done in person or even online. For example, consider joining:
  - A professional club
  - A book club
  - Volunteer group
  - Adult education classes or a gym/fitness class
  - Faith-based groups
2. Ask your current friends to invite you to meet others in their extended network who may share similar interests.
3. Go for a walk in your area or in local parks. Say hello to others, and if you can, start a conversation with your neighbours.
4. Go to community events, such as concerts in the park, village fairs, etc., for opportunities to meet others in your community. You never know where you might find your next golf partner, walking companion, or dog play date.

## Tips for Enjoying Your Time Alone

While spending time with others is helpful for our mood and well-being, quality alone time can also be healing and a positive experience. Review the tips below to engage in quality “alone time.”

1. When alone, consider what makes you truly happy. Is it something like relaxing, creating, cooking /baking or reading? Create a list of activities that you enjoy and are valuable to do when you are alone. Try to cultivate positive feelings towards having alone time. Practise gratitude for the opportunity to spend time alone and engage in activities that are meaningful to you.
2. Learn a new skill or set new goals for the short- and long-term that you can do when alone. Try engaging in physical activity, walking in nature, learning a new language, etc.
3. Take up a new hobby (crafts, baking, etc.)
4. Practise mindfulness, meditation and/or yoga.
5. Become more active. Go for a walk or a hike, play fetch in a park with your dog, do some stretching outside in the sunshine.
6. Consider ways to change your routine if you are feeling bored.
7. Practise self-love (repeat positive self-affirmations and practise daily gratitude for yourself).

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