



understanding loneliness

We can all feel lonely at different points in our lives. Loneliness is a feeling and like all feelings, it's trying to tell us something.

Feeling lonely lets us know that we aren't feeling meaningfully connected enough with other people. It's trying to motivate us to do something different.

This doesn't necessarily mean having lots of people to hang out with, it's about meaningful connections – feeling understood and supported.

For some people, loneliness can feel overwhelming and can lead to feeling flat, sad and worried. Some people who experience loneliness might also experience anxiety or depression.

It's important to know that loneliness is not always the same as being alone. Some people can have little contact with others and not feel lonely at all, and some people who have many friends can feel lonely. Everyone is different.



When might you feel lonely?

Feeling lonely can happen at any time. Big life changes such as relationship break-ups, the death of someone close to us, or moving somewhere new can increase the likelihood of us feeling lonely.

Other things might include:

- starting new jobs, school, TAFE or uni
- living alone
- not feeling understood by others
- having little contact with others.



It can be hard to admit that we're feeling lonely. We might feel ashamed, embarrassed, or we might think it's our fault, but it's really common – we all feel lonely sometimes.



Things you can do when you're feeling lonely

There are many things we can do to support ourselves that can help us connect with others:

Acknowledge that you're feeling lonely

It's trying to encourage you to do something new. Understanding our emotions is an important step in trying something different.

Create a routine

Include meaningful and enjoyable activities. Doing stuff is really important for our mental health and wellbeing.

Be kind to yourself

Self-compassion helps gives us the strength to continue when we're faced with life's challenges.

Some places to look

Meet Up (www.meetup.com) has many groups both online and in-person; Facebook has online communities that you might be interested in; or you can create your own.

headspace also hosts weekly Peer Support Chats discussions for young people by young people. See our website for more info.



Create connections

Connecting with others is an important part of being human. Healthy relationships can support us, give us a sense of belonging and improve our mental health and wellbeing.

Putting ourselves out there can feel scary though, but if we want things to change, we need to support ourselves and take action. When we face the things that challenge us, we start to build skills and gain confidence in our ability to cope.

Grow a relationship

Friendships can take time and effort to grow. Reach out to someone you have something in common with, invite them out and base the activity around whatever you have in common.

Join a group

Joining a group can help you meet new people that share your interests. There are many different types of groups you can join. These come in lots of shapes and forms. Some ideas you might explore include sporting, community, cultural, spiritual, recreational, creative and even online groups. Consider what you like doing, or try something new, and see if there's a group you can join.

Volunteer

Volunteering can help us meet new people and give us a sense of purpose. Volunteering Australia (www.volunteeringAustralia.org) is a national body that helps match you with a volunteering opportunity.



54%

Approximately one in two young people feel a sense of loneliness. (headspace 2020)¹.

Look after yourself

No matter what's going on, it's a good idea to be kind to yourself and practice self-care. These are things like sleeping well, eating well, limit alcohol and other drugs, building skills for tough times and staying active.

Getting support

Feelings of loneliness can come and go, but if we feel it constantly or it's affecting our ability to do things, it can be a sign that we need extra support. Reach out to a trusted friend, family member, Elder, teacher, counsellor, or a health service for support.

Check out our website for other tips on looking after your mental health and wellbeing – headspace.org.au/tips

1. headspace. Loneliness over time: headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey 2020 [Internet]. 2020. Available from: https://headspace.org.au/assets/HSP10869-Loneliness-Report_FA01.pdf



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit headspace.org.au

If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

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