Loneliness

Understanding how loneliness affects us and where to find support.

Understanding loneliness

1 in 6
People globally experience loneliness.
(World Health Organisation)

1 in 5
Employees have reported feeling lonely at work.
Mental Health UK

Loneliness can put you at an increased risk of **anxiety, depression, low self-esteem & sleep problems.**
(Mind)

£2.5 Billion
Estimated cost of loneliness each year for UK employers.
(GOV.UK)

Loneliness is more than just being alone.

It's the feeling that the connections we have aren't quite meeting our emotional or social needs.

You can feel lonely even when you're surrounded by people. It can affect anyone, at any age or stage of life, and it's nothing to be ashamed of.

What can loneliness feel like?

Loneliness doesn't look the same for everyone. Sometimes it can be difficult to recognise, and people may not feel comfortable talking about it.

Some people's experiences of loneliness may feel like:

- **Feeling disconnected from your relationships.**
- **Feeling isolated even in a crowd, at a party, or living with family.**
- **Finding it difficult to build or maintain relationships.**
- **Having nobody you feel comfortable opening up to.**
- **Wanting to connect but feeling low, anxious, overwhelmed or emotionally drained.**
- **Withdrawing from social activities or avoiding interactions.**

Someone can appear happy, confident and sociable on the outside, while experiencing loneliness internally. It can also be both a contributor to and a consequence of poor mental health.

Small steps to help grow social connections

Reach out
Send a message, arrange a catch-up or pick up the phone to someone you trust.

Make connections
Join a club, group or activity based on something you enjoy.

Take a break from screens
Make time for face-to-face interactions where possible.

Get out and about
Go for a walk, visit a local café or spend time in places where you can be around others.

Talk about how you feel
Share your feelings with someone you trust. You don't have to deal with them alone.

Be kind to yourself
Don't put pressure on yourself to feel better overnight. Building connections can take time.

Stay connected at work
Arrange a coffee with a colleague, or make time for informal catch-ups.

Is loneliness impacting your day to day life?

If loneliness is affecting your mental health, wellbeing or day-to-day life, consider reaching out for support. This could mean speaking to your GP, an appropriate healthcare professional or a mental health support service.

If you have access to an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), its confidential helpline can also be a helpful first step in accessing appropriate support.

Sometimes, simply talking about how we truly feel can help lighten the load and make taking those first steps towards getting help feel more manageable.

Remember, you don't have to navigate loneliness on your own. Reaching out for help is a positive step, not a sign of weakness.

Further support online

NHS - Practical guidance and areas to get support.

Mind - Mental health charity with supportive information.

British Red Cross - Resources to help address loneliness.

Samaritans - Call 116 123 for confidential emotional support 24/7.

Sources: www.nhs.co.uk, www.mind.org.uk, gov.co.uk, mentalhealth-uk.org, www.who.int

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