

14 SIMPLE THINGS TO DO When You're Feeling Lonely

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During the pandemic, loneliness has spread almost as fast as the virus. Maybe you're cut off from family and friends. Maybe you miss the daily interactions at your office or neighborhood coffee shop.

While recent events have created new challenges, loneliness has long been a part of daily life. It's natural to need a community and a sense of belonging. However, these feelings are manageable.

Learn how to deal with loneliness when you're alone or in a crowd. Try these 14 simple things that will help you to feel more content and connected.

Connecting with Others

The quality of your relationships matters more than the quantity. Build a network of support where you can feel loved and cared for.

Try these techniques:

- 1. Stay in touch.** Make your family and friends a top priority. Block out time to spend together on a regular basis. Take the initiative to plan outings and parties. Set up weekly coffee dates and phone calls.
- 2. Open up.** Allow yourself to be vulnerable. **Express your thoughts and feelings.** Talk about sensitive subjects. Pick a quiet time and place. Slow down and listen to each other.

3. **Maintain boundaries.** Healthy relationships are based on respect and trust. Understand your limits when it comes to personal space and making commitments. Let others know how you expect to be treated.
4. **Express appreciation.** Strengthen your relationships by showing gratitude and affection. Thank others for their kindness. Recognize their talents and accomplishments.
5. **Volunteer your services. Helping others puts your own troubles into perspective and makes you feel more connected.** Sort cans at a local food bank or go grocery shopping for an elderly neighbor.
6. **Join a club.** Find others who share your interests. Start a running group or browse through Meetup for events that interest you.
7. **Prepare for transitions.** There are times in life when you're more likely to feel lonely. If you're moving to a new city or getting divorced, **be proactive about staying engaged.**

Appreciating Your Own Company

Do you enjoy spending time alone? Treating yourself like a beloved friend will help you to see solitude as a positive experience and relate more successfully to others.

Keep these ideas in mind:

1. **Accept yourself.** There's a difference between being alone and being lonely. Value yourself for who you are. **Let go of judgements and embrace your feelings.**
2. **Build your confidence.** Think about the purpose of your life. Clarify your values

and use them to set meaningful goals. Give yourself credit for making an effort.

3. **Limit screen time.** Do you use your devices to distract you from your thoughts? Put your phone away for a few hours a day. Turn your TV off unless you want to watch something specific.
4. **Continue learning.** Devote your extra free time to acquiring new knowledge and skills. Take courses online or attend classes at a local university. Read books and listen to podcasts.
5. **Find a hobby. Fill your leisure time with challenging and enriching activities.** There are hobbies to match any kind of interests or budget. Browse through magazines or ask your loved ones what they enjoy doing.
6. **Seek balance.** Most adults need some time to socialize and some quiet time for themselves. Find the schedule that works for you.
7. **Consider counseling.** If you have these feelings much of the time, it could be a sign of more serious issues such as depression, and professional help may greatly benefit you. Call the free federal hotline at 1-800-662-HELP to find resources in your area.

Loneliness can have serious consequences for your physical and mental health. If you feel empty and isolated, reach out to friends and family or talk with a therapist. You deserve to have positive relationships with yourself and others.