Managing Loneliness

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Have you wondered how it's possible that on a planet made up of 7.9 billion people, so many of us battle with feelings of loneliness?

According to research carried out by Campaign To End Loneliness, 45% of adults feel occasionally, sometimes or often lonely. This equates to around 25 million people.

Before we dive into what causes us to feel lonely, let's take a look at how we define loneliness and why the feeling means different things to different people.

What is Loneliness?

Loneliness is less about *being* alone, and more about *feeling* alone. It's a state of mind that is characterised by yearning for human contact and connection. Many people who struggle with loneliness often describe the experience as isolating and empty, with an unshakeable sense of feeling forgotten or rejected.

Loneliness Vs. Solitude

While loneliness is an involuntary state that sufferers wish to escape, solitude is quite the opposite. Those who seek 'aloneness' are content with their own company and tend to strike a healthy balance between social interaction and time alone, whereas lonely people crave companionship but may be unable or ill-equipped to make a change.

What Causes Loneliness?

Although there's no clear cut answer, there are many things that may contribute to feelings of loneliness or make social interaction difficult.

Life changes: Starting a new job, moving to an unfamiliar area, experiencing a loss and other situational variables can bring about feelings of loneliness and isolation, especially if you're struggling to make friends or form meaningful connections in the wake of the change.

Mental health conditions: Psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety can cause individuals to withdraw socially, which in turn can lead to loneliness. This tends to trigger a difficult cycle in which a person retreats from society due to their mental wellbeing, only to find themselves in an isolated situation which impacts their wellbeing further.

Low self-esteem: Those with poor self-worth may be at risk of experiencing loneliness as they believe themselves to be unworthy of other's time and attention. Much like when suffering with a mental health condition, this lack of confidence can lead people to withdraw, resulting in social isolation and loneliness.

[Research](#) has also found that high levels of loneliness may be associated with physical health symptoms, shyness, living alone, small social networks and low-quality relationships.

Tips to Manage Loneliness

There are many steps you can take to overcome loneliness, boost your social interaction and improve your confidence. From reaching out to potential new acquaintances to rekindling old relationships, let's explore just some of the things you can do to lessen the feeling of loneliness.

Join a club or volunteer scheme

Although the thought of 'putting yourself out there' may be intimidating, taking part in a club or volunteering in your local area is a great way to meet like-minded individuals and cultivate new relationships.

Practice self-care

Looking after your physical wellbeing can be really effective in boosting your mental wellbeing, too. Try to introduce manageable change by going for short daily walks, taking the time to stretch or listening to a guided breathing exercise to help clear your mind and feel better equipped to tackle feelings of loneliness with positive action.

Adopt a pet

Did you know that dogs, cats and other pets can reduce stress, anxiety and depression while also easing loneliness? This is because caring for an animal helps you feel needed

and wanted, fulfils the basic human need for touch and diverts your attention away from your problems. Plus, nothing beats an excitedly wagging tail at the end of a hard day.

Repeat positive affirmations

Being lonely can take a big toll on your self-esteem. To combat this and remind yourself of your worth, try switching negative, self-critical thoughts with daily affirmations. Find things you like about yourself, such as your caring nature or sense of humour, and repeat those sentiments in your head or in front of a mirror throughout the day. Simply reminding yourself that you are worthy of other's time and attention is a great way to start seeing yourself in a more positive light.

Reach out

Talking to someone you trust about how you're feeling is a key step to working through your emotions and deciding on the best route forward. This might be a friend, colleague, family member or a GP who can signpost you to further help, support groups and suitable forms of therapy.

If your employer offers Vivup's Employee Assistance Programme, there are lots of useful resources and downloadable workbooks to help you deal with issues such as loneliness. You can also access a 24-hour telephone helpline for responsive, confidential and totally independent advice should you or a colleague need mental health support.

Sources

[The facts on loneliness | Campaign to End Loneliness](#)

[Loneliness: Causes and Health Consequences](#)

[How to Cope With Loneliness: 9 Strategies to Try](#)

[How to Self-Care When Battling Loneliness](#)