

CHANGES MODULE 19: Loneliness



Most of us need some form of social contact to maintain good mental health. Everyone has different social needs though; some feel satisfied with a few close friends, whereas others might need a wider social network to feel content.

Loneliness isn't only about the number of people in our lives, it's about the quality of those connections. It is still possible to feel lonely when surrounded by people who we feel don't understand us.

It is not surprising then that loneliness and poor mental health are closely linked; we can feel lonely when we're unwell and being unwell can make us feel lonely. In fact, loneliness has even been found to impact on people's physical health.

There is also a lot of stigma around loneliness so that talking about it is hard. Other people will not always be able to tell when we're lonely either, further increasing the feeling of isolation.

Tips for coping with loneliness

There is no easy fix for loneliness because developing meaningful connections with others takes time, but here are some tips from our members:

1. Reach out, open up
"Talking to someone about your loneliness can feel risky, but sometimes it can really change the nature of that friendship for the better"
2. Take a break from social media
"I delete all my social media apps for a bit when I start feeling lonely as I compare myself to everyone else but what's on there is only half the story"
3. Spend some time with animals
"Animals really take my mind off my loneliness - I visit the city farm and ask if I can walk my mate's dog sometimes"
4. Find an activity that's right
"I find talking to people hard but my walking group really helps. I can walk without having to say anything, but gradually over time I've felt more comfortable to chat and made some friends"
5. Keep attending meetings!
"Sometimes even just sitting in the corner listening is good because you find that you are not alone. It's just nice being around people that understand"
6. Ask for help, there are lots of organisations available. We've listed some over the page.



Discussion Options

Have you been feeling lonely recently?

What helps you when you are feeling lonely?

Resources

Mindline - 0300 123 3393

Samaritans - 116 123

“How To Deal With Loneliness”

<https://www.healthline.com/health/how-to-deal-with-loneliness#mental-health>

“Campaign to end loneliness” <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/resources-2/>