Loneliness

Loneliness

Loneliness is something everybody experiences. Like any feeling, loneliness will usually pass in time.

Our brains are wired for connection with others and the pain of loneliness is a part of our survival instinct.

You can be surrounded by lots of people and feel lonely. At other times, you might be perfectly happy spending time alone.

- Q- Why would some people love to be 'lonely' in this picture?

Loneliness

We all feel lonely from time to time. Feelings of loneliness are personal, so everyone's experience of loneliness will be different.

One common description of loneliness is the feeling we get when our need for social contact and relationships is not met. But loneliness is not always the same as being alone.

- Q-Have you ever been alone but not felt lonely?

- Q- Can you name some examples that show the differences between being alone and loneliness?

Loneliness

You don't have to be a certain age to feel lonely – anyone can experience it – and in lockdown, the struggle has been especially real.

New figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reveal that in the week after the clocks went back (at the start of November), the UK experienced the highest levels of loneliness since the pandemic began – 9.2 million people felt lonely "always or often", compared with 6.6 million before the pandemic.

- Q- Quick fire round, why is this?

Loneliness can be life-altering for those who experience it. It can also be a minefield for those who want to help but don't know where to start.

- Q- Why would Bob be feeling lonely in the picture?
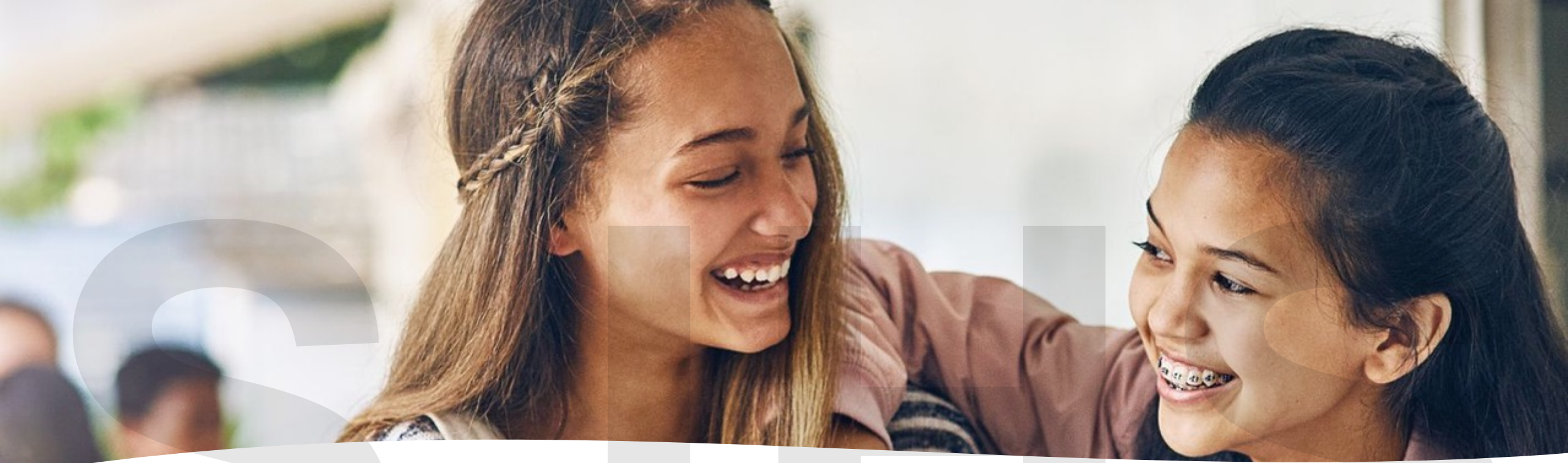
Loneliness

Some people may choose to be alone and live happily without much contact with others, different people may find this a lonely experience.

You may have lots of social contact or be in a relationship or part of a family, but still feel lonely – especially if you don't feel understood or cared for by the people around you.

- Q- Suzie (on the right) looks happy in the picture but when she goes home, she feels alone, why would this be the case?

Loneliness

- Q-When do you think people would enjoy being alone or just need that personal space without others?

- Q- For a few moments, share with a trusted person near you when you have sought opportunities to be alone.

- Q- Why did you need that time and space?

- Q- What purpose did it serve?

Loneliness

Loneliness has many different causes, which vary from person to person. We don't always understand what it is about an experience that makes us feel lonely.

For some people, certain life events may mean they feel lonely, such as:

- experiencing a bereavement

- going through relationship issues

- retiring, losing the social contact at work/school

- changing jobs and feeling isolated from your co-workers

- starting a new school or university

- moving to a new area or country without family, friends or community networks.

Other people find they feel lonely at certain times of the year, such as around Christmas, an anniversary.

- Q- Why do you think this is so?

Loneliness

Some research suggests that people who live in certain circumstances, or belong to groups, are more vulnerable to loneliness. For example, if you:

- have no friends or family

- are separated from your family

- are a single parent or a carer – you may find it hard to maintain a social life

- belong to minority groups and live in an area without others from a similar background

- are excluded from social activities due to mobility problems or a shortage of money

- experience discrimination and stigma because of a disability or long-term health problem

- experience discrimination and stigma because of your gender, race or culture

- have experienced abuse– you may find it harder to form close relationships with other people.

- Q- Pick one of these reasons and discuss it with a person sitting close to you. Try and answer the whys.

Loneliness

Some people experience deep and constant feelings of loneliness that do not disappear, regardless of their social situation or how many friends they have.

There are many reasons people experience this kind of loneliness. You might feel unable to like yourself or to be liked by others, or you may lack self confidence.

Thinking about what is making you feel lonely may help you find a way of feeling better.

- https://youtu.be/R8A7JodFx4s 2min 30

Loneliness

So what can we do to **help ourselves?**

When you're lonely it's easy to feel helpless, but there is lots you can do to take charge of the situation.

- **1. Open up**
If you're feeling lonely, don't suffer in silence. The best first step you can take is to talk to someone. If you feel like you don't have anyone close to you, or are uncomfortable talking to friends or family, it might be worth talking to someone neutral. The Samaritans provide a free helpline to anyone struggling with their emotional wellbeing.

- **2. Address the root cause**
Loneliness is often a symptom of an underlying cause. You might have trouble trusting people, or you may feel isolated due to depression. It's a good idea to think about what might be causing your loneliness. https://www.mind.org.uk/

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- **3. Learn to think differently**
Try to rewire how you look at and respond to situations, helping to build confidence and overcome some of the causes of loneliness, such as a lack of self-esteem. Thinking this way will give you the tools you need to make positive life-long changes, so it could help you to manage your loneliness. https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/

- **4. Keep active**
Exercise releases feel-good hormones into your brain, so exercising regularly can help improve your outlook, making you feel more positive. Finding ways to keep active can also introduce you to new people and provide regular contact points to build connection into your weekly routine.
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAxW1XT0iEJo0TYlRfn6rYQ

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- **5. Explore your hobbies**

If you have a special interest or hobby, use this as a starting point for meeting people. Look for local groups, events or societies based around your hobbies so you're engaging with activities you're passionate about and finding others who have shared interests. https://hobbyhelp.com/

- **6. Volunteer your time**

Another great way to connect to people in your local area is to volunteer your time. Supporting your community will introduce you to new people and help you to feel grounded in your area. Research has also found that helping others makes us feel happy, so volunteering can help improve your mental wellbeing too. https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/

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- **7. Step away from the screen**

Spending less time on social media may help to reduce your feelings of loneliness. Studies have found that social media is a major contributor to feelings of depression and loneliness.

Scrolling through streams of photos and posts that present a false picture of perfection and seeing people with high numbers of 'friends' can cause you to reflect on your own life as 'worse' than others. Remember that posts on social media don't provide a true or full representation of people's lives. They are snapshots and often heavily edited in a positive light. Spending less time on social media will give you the time to get out and meet people face to face. Having a small number of strong social bonds with other people is more important than having many superficial friendships. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-46758809

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- **8. Choose a well-balanced diet**

Making healthy choices about your diet can make you feel emotionally stronger. You're doing something positive for yourself, which lifts your self-esteem.

A good diet helps your brain and body work efficiently, too. Aim to have a balanced diet that includes all the <u>main food groups</u>.

- **9. Get enough sleep**

8-9 hours is the average amount of sleep a young person needs for their body and mind to fully rest.

Writing a "to do" list for the next day before bed can organise your thoughts and clear your head.

Loneliness

Loneliness is all around us. Even if you don't feel lonely yourself, you can help to overcome loneliness in your community **by supporting others**:

- **1. Talk to your neighbours**
When you have a busy life it's easy to rush in and out of the house without stopping for more than a wave at your neighbours. But we can all spare five minutes here and there. Next time you wave at a neighbour, why not pop over for a quick chat, ask how they're doing and talk about their day. Showing an interest in others' lives helps to make them feel included and cared for.

- **2. Volunteer locally with older people**
Older people are at particular risk of loneliness for many reasons, including mobility issues making it harder for them to get out and about, and families moving away. Charities such as Age UK have launched befriending schemes that will connect you to older people in your community.

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- **3. Check in with family regularly**

Whether your family live around the corner or on the other side of the world, getting in touch regularly can help prevent feelings of loneliness and abandonment. Set up a regular phone call/Zoom call and plan for more meaningful catch ups whenever you can find the time.

- **4. Check in with mates too**

 If someone means a lot to you make sure you tell them and make time to speak, listen, comfort, console or have a bit of fun.

Remember **'Mates care for each other'.**

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- Q-Want to know more?

- Q- Want more info about helping others?

- https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/

- https://www.ageuk.org.uk/

- https://www.mind.org.uk/

- https://www.mind.org.uk/

Loneliness

Whether you are a Liverpool fan or not, listen to the words of this famous song.

- Q- What do you think the message is?
- https://youtu.be/OV5_LQArLa0

- Q- How has Akon become lonely?
- Q- What regrets does he have?
- https://youtu.be/6EEW-9NDM5k