

12 Tips for Coping with Loneliness

By Anneli Driessen Ph.D., Ph.D., MCC – March 17, 2021

Not only are older adults primarily affected by loneliness, but these days people of all ages, especially those who live by themselves, are also suffering.

Studies have linked loneliness to multiple, measurable adverse health and behavioral impacts including:

- Depressive Episodes
- Anxiety
- Impaired Decision Making
- Aggression
- Suicides
- Loss of Sleep, or Loss of Quality of Sleep
- Coronary Heart Disease
- Increased Blood Pressure

Fortunately, the experience of loneliness can be changed.

1. Acknowledge Your Feelings

Pretending that you're not feeling lonely might prevent you from taking proactive steps to reduce those feelings.

Tell someone you trust how you are feeling. If you don't have anyone to share your feelings with, write them down. This self-awareness is important to take your next steps.

2. Think about Your Connections

Make a list. When feeling lonely, it's easy to forget that there are people in your life who do care. Feelings of loneliness can make us forget that. You are probably not as alone as you feel.

3. Talk to yourself – out loud

When you are alone, talking to yourself out loud helps you think clearly and be your own best friend.

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4. Learn Something New

Mental boredom can spiral into feelings of loneliness. What are you curious about? What did you always want to learn but never had the time to do? Learning is active and keeps your mind and body engaged. You might even meet new people if you participate in online activities.

5. Volunteer

It's a known fact that people who volunteer tend to be happier than people who don't. Contact your local volunteer agency and find out where and how you can help. You may also think about helping a student, a business, or serving as a driver. There are many opportunities out there!

6. Adopt or Foster a Pet

A pet's love is priceless, and caring for a pet creates a feeling of connection and satisfaction. For example, a dog needs to get out every day, and taking your dog outside to a park is a great way to meet people.

If you can't adopt a pet, research fostering one. It's a great way to get the benefits of a pet even if you can't commit long-term.

7. Make a Special Day just with yourself

Ask yourself what you enjoy doing, and then treat yourself to that activity. Maybe you treat yourself to your favorite restaurant or café. Or perhaps you go for a walk near a lake or mountain. Maybe you go shopping?

Doing special things on YOUR day brings you joy and satisfaction.

8. Consider New Friendships

The idea of making new friends can feel awkward. Maybe a book club, a workout, a yoga class, a dance group, or a lecture series is right for you. Find out from www.Gidout.com where things are happening in town. Personal connections will follow naturally.

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9. Rediscover Nature

You don't have to travel to the wilderness to get the benefits of nature. People who spent at least two hours a week in nature report a greater sense of well-being than those who spent time in their homes. Being outside allows you to breathe in good, fresh air. Even rainy days have their unique beauty. Observe and feel the small wonders of nature with all your senses. You may discover and experience something new and exquisite that puts you in awe.

10. Move your Body

Exercise brings neurochemical changes that can help counteract the negative effects of loneliness. Not everyone likes lifting weights, for example, but maybe gardening, or dancing by yourself? Make it enjoyable!

11. Expand your Gratitude

Be more mindful and aware of the little things you have in your life. You will likely find many things that you never paid attention to before. Allow yourself to be more grateful than ever before for these new discoveries.

12. Meditate, be still, or pray

Every day, no matter what, take some time to go into your inner world and allow yourself to feel safe and loved by your Creator. This centering will give you calmness, clarity, and the focus you need to apply the other strategies mentioned in this article.

Practice being here, at this very moment, now, and affirm that now, at this moment, all is good. This helps to realize that the past is done with and the future has not yet arrived.

Taking these tips to heart will combat your feelings of loneliness and in turn make you stronger and healthier. It will give you new perspectives and insights about yourself, the value of your life, and your purpose. You will become more self- and inner-directed rather than directed by others. All of this will increase your self-confidence and self-appreciation.

YOU can do this!