

Tips for Dealing With Loneliness

We share some practical ideas for giving loneliness the cold shoulder



Loneliness can affect anyone. The term is often characterised as 'being alone', but a more accurate interpretation is when you feel that you haven't had a genuine connection with anyone. It's quite common to feel lonely in a house full of flatmates, especially if you weren't friends to begin with. Whether you're living on your own or with others, here are some ways to beat the blues and make a real connection.

1. Tell Your Loved Ones How You Feel

We often tell our friends and family that our door is always open if they need anything, but how many of us actually make that call? It can be hard to ask for help, even of those closest to us. Likewise, friends often won't make the first move to support you, for fear of stepping on your toes or making you feel uncomfortable.

Whether your loved ones live near or far, simply telling them that you could do with catching up more often, or putting a monthly meet up in the diary can really help. Opening up to others also helps to build trust, making a connection feel more genuine.

2. Plan for Times of Increased Loneliness

You might be able to anticipate when you're going to feel more lonely. Perhaps at certain times of the week, when you're alone for long periods of time or when your usual companions have different commitments. See this time as an opportunity to do something important to you, rather than a result of not having plans. Get creative; make music or art; bake something; have an evening of indulgent me-time. You could even sign up to a virtual class. Making plans means you stop feeling like you're 'doing nothing' and focuses your mind on 'doing something'.

Tips for Dealing With Loneliness

3. Try Talking Therapy

Talking therapy is a chance to speak to a professional about your thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Loneliness can often be wrapped up with other mental health problems, and talking with someone who doesn't know you like a friend or family member can aid you in coming up with a game plan.

4. Join a Club Based on One of Your Interests

What better way to make new friends than by connecting over something you both enjoy? Take a look online for clubs in your local area. Many clubs are doing things virtually right now, but there is ample opportunity to start meeting people in person once things open up again.

If you don't have a particular hobby, give one of the ideas below a try:

- **Bouldering** - Like rock climbing but not as high and without ropes, this adventurous sport requires both physical and mental strength to complete. Though you climb each 'problem' (bouldering route) on your own, many climbers will chat to solve problems together, discussing the best way to reach the top and cheering each other on. Many climbing centres put on social events, where climbers attendees are more open to making new friends.
- **Book Clubs** - In person or virtual, book clubs are a classic way to meet new people and connect over characters you love and hate. Check out our article about **virtual book clubs**.
- **Dog Walking Groups** - Dog owners can be a friendly bunch. If you have a four-legged friend, look out for local walking groups in your area. Facebook is a great place to start, as well as notice boards in local pet shops. Even if you don't have a dog, you can try to borrow one. There are borrowing websites like BorrowMyDoggy - or even just offer to take a friend's for a weekend - if they're going away! Chances are you'll be doing them a favour too!
Walking Club with Colleagues - We end up spending a lot of time with our colleagues, and the working day is a lot more enjoyable if we can make some genuine friends along the way. Schedule in an evening or weekend walk with your team, either as a fundraiser or just for fun, and get to know who your colleagues are outside of the daily grind. Walking is also a great way to catch up with work friends who you no longer see in the office.
- **Amateur Theatre** - If you enjoy acting, amateur theatre might be perfect for you. While professional theatre is about delighting the audience, am-dram has a focus on supporting the actors, building a community together and helping each other to improve.