

10 Tips to Overcoming Loneliness



Humans need social connections to survive and thrive. One report found that one-third of adults age 45 and older feel lonely and nearly one-fourth of adults 65 and older are considered to be socially isolated. Studies have shown that loneliness (distressing feelings of being alone or separated) and social isolation (lack of social contacts or interaction regularly) are associated with increased risk for health problems such as depression, heart disease, and cognitive decline. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the former US Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, declared that loneliness is an epidemic, with the equivalent reduction in lifespan to smoking 15 cigarettes a day!

Although loneliness is a challenge for many, there is much we can do to overcome loneliness. Consider the following tips to combat loneliness:

1. **Join a class or club.** Whether it's an exercise class or book club, joining an existing group can help you find others who share your interests.
2. **Volunteer.** Volunteering for a cause you believe in can help you feel a deeper sense of gratitude for what you

do have. It can also help you find more meaning in your life and connect you with other volunteers that have similar altruistic goals as you.

3. **Adopt a pet.** Pets offer companionship, unconditional love, and can potentially provide ways to connect with others (i.e. while walking your dog).
4. **Strengthen existing relationships.** Make an effort to talk with family and friends about what is occurring in their lives.
5. **Talk to strangers.** Even small interactions with strangers, such as a cashier at a store, can help you feel socially connected.
6. **Find support online.** Connect with others who have similar interests in Meetup or Facebook groups. Many apps, like workout or fitness apps, also have a social element or discussion board.
7. **Practice self-care.** When you are feeling lonely, be sure to take care of yourself. Eating nutritious foods, exercising, spending time in the sunshine, and getting enough sleep can boost your mood.
8. **Stay busy.** Keep yourself distracted from negative feelings by doing a hobby or home improvement project that you've been meaning to do. Take time to invest in yourself and your interests while also keeping your mind occupied in the process.
9. **Plan ahead.** Make plans ahead of time for extra support from family or friends on holidays, anniversaries, or other times that may be particularly challenging.
10. **Seek help.** Sometimes getting out to meet people isn't enough. Seeking the help of a professional can give you the tools needed to combat the challenges you are facing.

While it can be tempting to just retreat into a corner and hide when feeling lonely, doing just one of these small tips can improve your mood.

Additional Resources:

Additional tips to overcoming loneliness: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/click-here-happiness/201902/feeling-lonely-discover-18-ways-overcome-loneliness>

Tips to support others who are lonely: <https://www.beliefnet.com/inspiration/7-ways-to-cheer-up-that-lonely-someone.aspx>

References

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