

What is Loneliness?

Loneliness means different things to different people. But there is a general sense of isolation or disconnection from others, or a feeling we are lacking or missing social connections and companionship. Loneliness is a part of life and something that most of us experience at some point. Feelings of loneliness are personal, so everyone's experience will be different. Loneliness can feel horrible and embarrassing but there is nothing to feel ashamed about. It's human to feel lonely. Some people may only feel lonely at certain times. Some people may experience chronic loneliness: a deep feeling that goes on for a long time. Research shows that people can fall into a cycle of loneliness: the longer we feel lonely the more we start to

Supporting Others

Reach out to friends, family or people you support to remind them you are there if they want to talk. Take time to listen to how they're feeling. Ask if there is anything you can do to help. Let them know about some of the support options. Avoid negative words. It's best to use neutral or positive language. For example, swap 'suffering' for 'experiencing'. Read more about how to talk about loneliness via [the Marmalade Trust](#).

[Age UK](#) have lots of resources about overcoming loneliness and [Age UK Oldham](#) offer a befriending service.

[Action Together](#) and [Oldham Social Prescribing](#) work to connect local people to community groups, activities and organisations.

[The Marmalade Trust](#) have excellent resources to support people to feel more connected.

[Mind](#) offers free advice via phone or email for people experiencing loneliness.

[The NHS](#) provide advice and things to try to support people with feelings of loneliness. [The Campaign to End Loneliness](#) provide advice and support about overcoming loneliness.

[Independent Age](#) offer a guide to tackling feeling lonely.

[The Silver Line](#) offers conversation and support for older people.

[Re-engage](#) offer telephone befriending and in-person gatherings for over 75s living alone.

[U3a](#) is a collection of charities that provide opportunities for those no longer in work to come together and learn for fun.

What Can I Do if I Feel Lonely?

Be kind to yourself; loneliness is a very normal human emotion. You don't have to do something dramatic; take small steps to feel more connected. Think about what you can do in the immediate moment: do you have friends, family, colleagues, or support workers you can reach out to? Or, is there a local group or online community you could join? Join an online community like [Side by Side](#) or access [Meetup](#), a website where you can meet new people who share your interests, through online and in-person events. If you have been experiencing chronic long-term loneliness and it is having a detrimental effect on your physical and mental health, talk to your GP or health worker. Take a look at the [Marmalade Trust's three-step approach](#) to help identify how you're feeling and what you can do about it.

Is it a Mental Health Problem?

Feeling lonely isn't a mental health problem. But having a mental health problem can increase feelings of loneliness. For example, people may avoid social events/activities; have low self-esteem; worry about engaging with others; feel like they could be a burden to others; find it difficult to speak about how they're feeling; or feel overwhelmed in busy public places, at events and parties.

Who Is Most Likely To Experience Loneliness?

According to the [Campaign to End Loneliness](#), 45% of adults feel occasionally, sometimes, or often lonely in England; around 25 million people. Loneliness has always been considered something that older people experience and this is still true. Nearly 60% of people over the age of 85 live alone, two-fifths of older people say television is their main form of company and over half a million older people go five or six days a week without speaking to anyone at all. Loneliness may be associated with older people but people aged 16-24 are now the most likely group to feel lonely. The [BBC's Loneliness Experiment](#) found that 40% of young people often or always feel lonely, compared to 27% of over 75s.

Loneliness 7-Minute Briefing

Safeguarding

When someone is lonely, they can take more risks and make different decisions to those they would usually make. Being lonely can increase an individual's risk of abuse or neglect. For example, someone who is lonely might be more susceptible to grooming or exploitation including financial abuse because they want to make connections with other people. In these cases, loneliness could become a safeguarding issue. It is important that people are made to feel that they can speak about feeling lonely, and that they are made aware of initiatives to tackle feelings of loneliness and how to get support from services should they need it. Contact the Oldham [Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub \(MASH\)](#) about concerns that someone is experiencing abuse or neglect.

Website: www.oldhamsafeguarding.org

Email: OldhamSafeguardingAdultsBoard@Oldham.gov.uk

