

# Loneliness and isolation

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 [ie.reachout.com/getting-help-2/minding-your-mental-health/loneliness-and-isolation/](https://ie.reachout.com/getting-help-2/minding-your-mental-health/loneliness-and-isolation/)

**There are times in everyone's life when we feel lonely or isolated. It can be for straightforward reasons, like being away from home or having problems with friends and family.**

You can also feel emotionally cut off from those around you, or feeling alone because of what's going on in your head that you're not sharing with your friends or family.

## Times you can experience loneliness

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Having low self-esteem can make us feel lonely, because we feel we're not as good as others.

After a relationship break-up it can be difficult to adjust to life as a single person again. Spending more time on your own can feel isolating.

When you're young, loneliness can be a big problem as it's not always easy to find a group of people you connect with or places to hang out.

This can be especially true in rural or isolated communities where it might seem hard to find people who share your interests.

No matter where you live, you can feel cut off from people at school or at home.

## Some common causes of loneliness:

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- Having a hard time with bullying or intimidation at school, college or work
- Finding it hard to talk to others because of shyness or social anxiety
- Living away from home for the first time
- Friends moving away for work or college
- Growing apart from people you've grown up with
- Unemployment is a really big cause of loneliness and isolation as it means you're at home all day without the opportunity to make new friends and keep busy. You can also feel like you don't have much news when you meet your friends, or feel like you don't want to see people
- Certain stressful events or worries can be a cause of loneliness, if you feel like you're the only person going through something or your life is different to people around you.

## Coping with loneliness

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There are lots of coping strategies for dealing with loneliness and isolation. A lot of them depend on what's causing these feelings.

For instance, if you've moved out of home or to a different country for college or a new job, it's natural you'll be lonely at first.

If there's no clear reason why you feel lonely, it might be a sign something's wrong.

### **Some tips for coping with loneliness:**

#### **Get busy**

Keeping yourself busy is a really effective way of dealing with loneliness.

If you're in a situation where you're bored or can't find a job, volunteer with something you care about or think you might be interested in. Feeling needed and useful is really important sometimes.

#### **Know you're not alone**

It doesn't mean there's something wrong with you. For example, leaving secondary school or college to do something new can be a scary time for everyone.

Being unemployed is also stressful. Life feels very different and the future is uncertain. Remember that everyone goes through lonely periods in life.

#### **Boost your self-esteem**

A lack of confidence can hold you back in social situations. Meeting new people can be stressful when you don't feel good about yourself. Think of one thing about yourself that others admire, and build on that. See [meeting new people](#) for more.

#### **Explore your interests**

Taking up a hobby you've always wanted to get into can help you combat loneliness and isolation in different ways.

If you're on your own in a new place it can be a great way of meeting new people and making new friends. If you're feeling lonely for no obvious reason, taking up an evening class or sport can help take your mind off it.

#### **Enjoy your own company**

It might feel weird at first if you're used to being surrounded by other people. But, spending time alone can be really liberating.

The freedom to be alone with your thoughts can be a great way of winding down. Try and feel comfortable with just yourself for company.

Generally when we think of people we want to be around, they are people who have a self-assuredness that is attractive to others.

Learning to be on your own and like your own company is a step towards this kind of confidence.

#### **Try not to worry**

Feelings of loneliness often come and go during life. Sometimes the best thing to do is accept your feelings and remember you'll probably feel better after a while.

If you're lonely because you're homesick, think about the point in the future when you'll be reunited with your friends and family (see [long distance relationships](#) for more). Also try to enjoy whatever new experiences you're having away from home.

If you're persistently lonely for no obvious reason, it can also be a sign of [depression](#) and something you should talk about, whether it's to family, friends or a counsellor. See [getting help](#) for more.

## Mind yourself

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Sometimes when we feel lonely or isolated, we can become more vulnerable to outside influences. Here are some tips on taking care of yourself.

### Take what you see online with a pinch of salt

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What people put out there on the likes of Facebook or Twitter can make us feel worse if we're feeling low. It can seem like everyone is having more fun with more friends than you, at every festival, having crazy night's out feeding our feelings of inadequacy. Remember people project the best of themselves so try not to get sucked into a spiral of envy looking at other people's photos and posts.

### Think it through before you join any groups or clubs

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When you're lonely the idea of belonging somewhere becomes more attractive. Cults and gangs often target lonely people, knowing they might be vulnerable.

### Don't become too dependent

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While online communities can be a great social outlet, don't become too dependent on them. Make sure you balance your social life and make the effort to talk to people in person.

### Build trust gradually

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Sometimes when you're lonely, you can place too much weight on new friendships and relationships. Build trust gradually, take it slow and accept your new friend as they are. Take your time with new relationships.