

Tell us what you think!



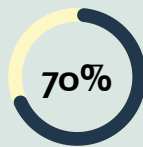
## DEALING WITH LONELINESS

Check out the evidence!

Everyone feels lonely from time to time, but during late adolescence and early adulthood feelings of loneliness can be particularly common,<sup>22</sup> especially when attending large classes and adjusting to university life.<sup>33</sup>

If you feel lonely, know that you are not alone!

In fact, up to 70% of youth and young adults report feelings of loneliness.<sup>26-27</sup>



Loneliness can lead to:

Lower academic performance<sup>11</sup>



Poor health<sup>26</sup>



More stress and mental health difficulties.<sup>29</sup>



Some of the reasons people feel lonely include (but are not limited to):



Relocating to university and feeling homesick<sup>10, 32</sup>



Interpersonal and social factors like difficulties with social skills or friendships<sup>21</sup>



Stress<sup>5</sup> and anxiety<sup>23</sup>



Adapting to a new culture, language barrier, or communication issues<sup>1, 15, 17, 28, 30</sup>



Having negative views about themselves and/or others<sup>14</sup>

HOWEVER, THERE ARE WAYS TO CHANGE THIS!

### Expand Your Social Network

Being in a new city often means we need to seek out new friends or social groups.

Having opportunities to meet new people and creating a sense of community can help us feel less lonely.

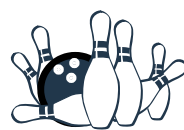
Here are some ideas to get you started:

1

Joining study groups can help us both academically and socially.



2



Joining or creating a club or a group that aligns with our goals or interests.

3

Engaging in fun physical activity by doing a sport/activity we enjoy or trying something new!<sup>18</sup>



4 Finding online communities that are aligned with our interests if we find it hard to connect with like-minded people in real life.<sup>13</sup>



There are **all sorts of online platforms**, but some options to try are Discord servers, Reddit, game servers, or anything else that connects us with others.



Just make sure whatever platform we use is **safe** before joining!

5

We might also try an activity and it turns out to not be our thing - that's fine!



The important thing is to keep trying different activities and not give up.





## Increase Feelings of Social-Connectedness

Often, we can have friends or others we spend time with, but we feel a lack of connection. Here are some ways we can enhance our feelings of social-connectedness:



### 1 Enhance the quality of our existing friendships.



Sometimes we can feel lonely even when we have friends.



This is because the quality of our relationships matter, not just the quantity.



How can we maintain or increase the quality of our existing relationships?



Visit a relative or family member and spend some quality time together.



Family support can help buffer against loneliness and negative emotions.<sup>6</sup>

Reach out to our existing friends and plan an activity.



This can be important if we're feeling homesick.

Remember! Allowing yourself to be **vulnerable** with friends/family members can help strengthen social connectedness.<sup>12</sup>



**Tip!** Next time you talk about an event, don't just talk about what was going on, but what emotions you felt in those moments.

If you find it difficult to reach out, check here for tips on how to **effectively communicate**.

View the **Effective Communication** resource!

### 2 Volunteer and give back to the community.



Being **prosocial**, or acting in a way that is positive and helpful to others, can help us feel more positive and connected with others.<sup>2, 25</sup>



There are lots of ways to do this, so pick a volunteer association that focuses on a topic you care about and aligns with your values.



Montreal has a volunteer bank we can visit.

## Take Care of Yourself

Taking care of ourselves and our mental health is an important part of being able to connect with others.

### TAKE A BREAK FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

Although social networking sites can help us feel connected, they can also:

- ↑ feelings of loneliness<sup>9</sup>
- ↓ well-being<sup>3, 19</sup>
- ↓ academic performance<sup>20</sup>



We often think social media posts reflect reality – but really, they are often **staged** and reflect how that person **wants to present themselves** to the world.



Consuming a lot of this type of social media can



lead us to compare ourselves to others and make us feel worse.<sup>7</sup>

Don't be afraid to disconnect and use social media in moderation.

## EXPLORE ON YOUR OWN

If we're living in a new city, make a "bucket list" of things to do and see.

An unfamiliar city will feel more familiar as we begin to explore, which can help reduce our feelings of loneliness.



This can even give you opportunities to meet new people who may have similar interests.

### SOME IDEAS:



Put on a favourite podcast or Spotify playlist and go for a walk.



Have a picnic with some of your favourite finger foods.



Go to the cinema.



Visit an outdoor market or food truck festival.



Go on a hike.

## ENGAGE IN MINDFULNESS PRACTICES



Sometimes, we feel lonely partly because of our feelings of anxiety or stress.

Managing that stress can help us feel more connected to others.



The self-compassion meditation can increase feelings of social connectedness.<sup>4, 16</sup>



Or try some of our guided mindfulness audios:

View the [Sitting Meditation](#) resource!

View the [Body Scan](#) resource!

View the [Self-Compassion Meditation](#) resource!

! Mindfulness takes practice, so don't get discouraged at first if you don't see immediate results.

## CHALLENGE OUR THOUGHTS ABOUT OURSELVES

We can feel lonely if we tend to view ourselves and others negatively, and expect rejection.

People who feel lonely may not see themselves in a positive light



or expect positive outcomes from their interactions with others.

This can make us think **negatively of ourselves in social situations.**

Use deep breathing exercises to reduce your anxiety.<sup>8</sup>

View the [Thought Challenge](#) resource!

We may fear that people are **watching or judging us in social situations**, making us feel very anxious.<sup>24</sup>

View the [Calming Breath](#) resource!

Challenge the thoughts and reframe them in a more balanced way.

So, be aware of our **negative thoughts** in the way we perceive ourselves and our relationships with others.<sup>31</sup>

## SPEAK WITH A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL



Don't be afraid to talk to a mental health professional about loneliness.

Lots of university students use these types of services, so don't feel ashamed or alone in needing help.



## FEEDBACK & CONTACT INFORMATION

EDUCATION  
FOR  
MENTAL  
HEALTH  
RESILIENCE

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View the reference list for this infographic



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