Helping all of us, and each other,

to overcome loneliness

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Everybody needs somebody

All of us can feel lonely at different times in our lives. For many of us, this experience is temporary. But for others, the effects of loneliness can be harder to deal with and overcome.

Loneliness can become an issue for us at times of transition in our lives – starting a new school, college or job; following a bereavement or relationship breakdown; taking on caring responsibilities; retirement or unemployment; or becoming a parent, with all of the demands that this can involve. All of these situations mean that people may need just a little help little help in re-connecting with the world around them.

Loneliness isn’t in itself a mental health problem, but the two are strongly linked. Having a mental health problem can increase your chances of feeling lonely. And feeling lonely can have a negative impact on your mental health.

Each of us can make life feel less lonely for someone else… Even small actions can make a big difference.

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Friends, Neighbours & Relatives

Feelings of loneliness and social isolation affect all sorts of people, and for all sorts of reasons. Someone who is lonely probably finds it hard to reach out. And there can be a sense of embarrassment about loneliness which can make it difficult for people to ask for help – or admit to themselves that they are having difficulties. As a friend, neighbour or family member there are lots of things that you can do to reach across the barriers that loneliness creates.

- Keep in touch by phone. Having a chat with a friend or relative over the phone can be the next best thing to being with them in person.
- Remember that older people may need additional help. Could you give them a lift somewhere, or help with other everyday tasks? Even a quick call to say hello and to let them know that you’ll be there for them if they need you.
- Connect with your neighbours, including those who may be living alone. Just saying hello can be how friendships begin. And it’s great to know that others are looking out for us.
- Are there people who you haven’t seen or heard from in a while? Renew the connection with them and make a commitment to staying in touch.

Schools, clubs and workplaces

Schools, clubs and workplaces are where many of us meet other people every day. They play a central role in community life. But they can also be places where people feel lonely amidst the busyness and conversations going on all around them. Sometimes being in a crowd can seem like the loneliest place of all. And it’s also the place where individual needs and stories can get overlooked. Could you help to make your school, organisation or workplace somewhere that everyone feels connected and included?

- Could you organise a Coffee and Connect event in your workplace or organisation – giving people an opportunity to spend a little time in conversation with others?
- Organise a Getting to Know Each Other Day – encouraging everyone to say hello to someone in their class or office that they don’t know very well, or haven’t talked to before.
- Create opportunities for the people around you to talk about loneliness and what it feels like – and make them aware of the support that is available.
- Make a decision to do something about your own feelings of loneliness – by joining a club or association, making a connection with colleagues, or getting involved in social activities and events.

Meeting, talking and doing things together...

Meeting, talking and doing things with other people is how we can make the most of life and its opportunities. It helps us to fulfil our potential and can make the world a better place. All of us have something important and unique to contribute.

Everybody needs somebody, and all of us have a part to play. And right now is the perfect moment to connect with others, start a conversation and to create an inclusive sense of community.

We’ll be featuring discussions and reports about loneliness across the BBC’s airwaves – describing its causes and effects and what people have done to overcome it. Our coverage will include what different organisations are doing to address loneliness and how you can get involved. And there’ll be stories about people’s experiences of loneliness as well…

You can find out more about what’s happening and some of the help that’s available by visiting our website bbc.co.uk/niappeals.

Playing Our Part is an Appeal with Inspire and several affiliate organisations – all of whom are running activities and events and are there to help on a year-round basis. Their contact details are available on our website.