Peer Education Project

Mental Health Foundation

Loneliness

Finding our connections to feel less lonely

A guide for staff supporting young people

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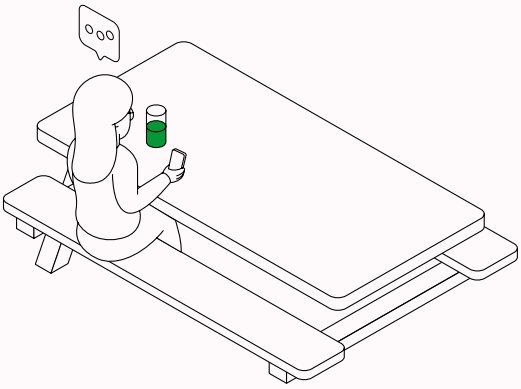


While loneliness is a universal emotion, everyone experiences it differently.

It's commonly defined as the feeling we get when there is a mismatch between the relationships we have and those that we need. Loneliness is different to solitude or simply being alone: you can be lonely even when surrounded by people.

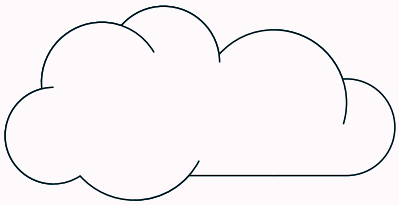
Loneliness is often defined in three ways:

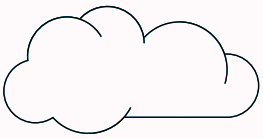
- **Emotional loneliness:** The absence or loss of a significant other, such as a partner or close friend, with whom you have a meaningful relationship.
- **Social loneliness:** The lack of a wider social network that can provide a sense of belonging and community.
- **Existential loneliness:** A sense of feeling disconnected from others, and as though life is empty and lacks meaning.

Although loneliness is not a mental health problem, it is an experience that can affect our mental health. Loneliness that is experienced over a long period of time can lead to low mood and self-esteem, increased anxiety and stress, and poor sleep.

Experiencing loneliness can be difficult, but there are things we can do to support ourselves and others with the challenging thoughts, feelings, moods, and emotions that can be associated with loneliness.

This guide provides tips and resources on how to support yourself, your colleagues, and your pupils with feelings of loneliness.





Supporting yourself and colleagues with feelings of loneliness

Resources to support yourself and colleagues

Mental Health Foundation resources

Our vision at the Mental Health Foundation is for a world with good mental health for all. With prevention at the heart of what we do, we aim to find and address the sources of mental health problems so that people and communities can thrive.

Tips on looking after your mental health
Read these tips on how to look after your mental health.

Tips on how to support mental health at work
Read these tips on how to look after your mental health at work.

Mental health podcast on loneliness
Listen to this podcast on what it means to feel lonely, how it affects our mental health, who experiences it and what we can do to cope with it.

Advice on coping with loneliness
Read these recommendations on how to support yourself and others when experiencing loneliness, which have been informed by published literature, focus groups and a survey completed by people with lived experience.

A personal story on loneliness
Read this personal story on experiencing loneliness and depression, and how they built up the courage to speak to people.

A loneliness guide for teachers and education staff
Read this guide, developed by Education Support in partnership with the Mental Health Foundation, exploring what loneliness is, the different types of loneliness, and ways to support ourselves and peers.

Education Support resources

Education Support is the only UK charity dedicated to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of teachers and education staff in schools, colleges, and universities.

If you need support, speak to a qualified counsellor using Education Support's 24-hour helpline.

Call: **08000 562 561** (free)

Spotting symptoms of depression and understand what to do next
Read this guide on what you can do to support yourself if you think you have depression.

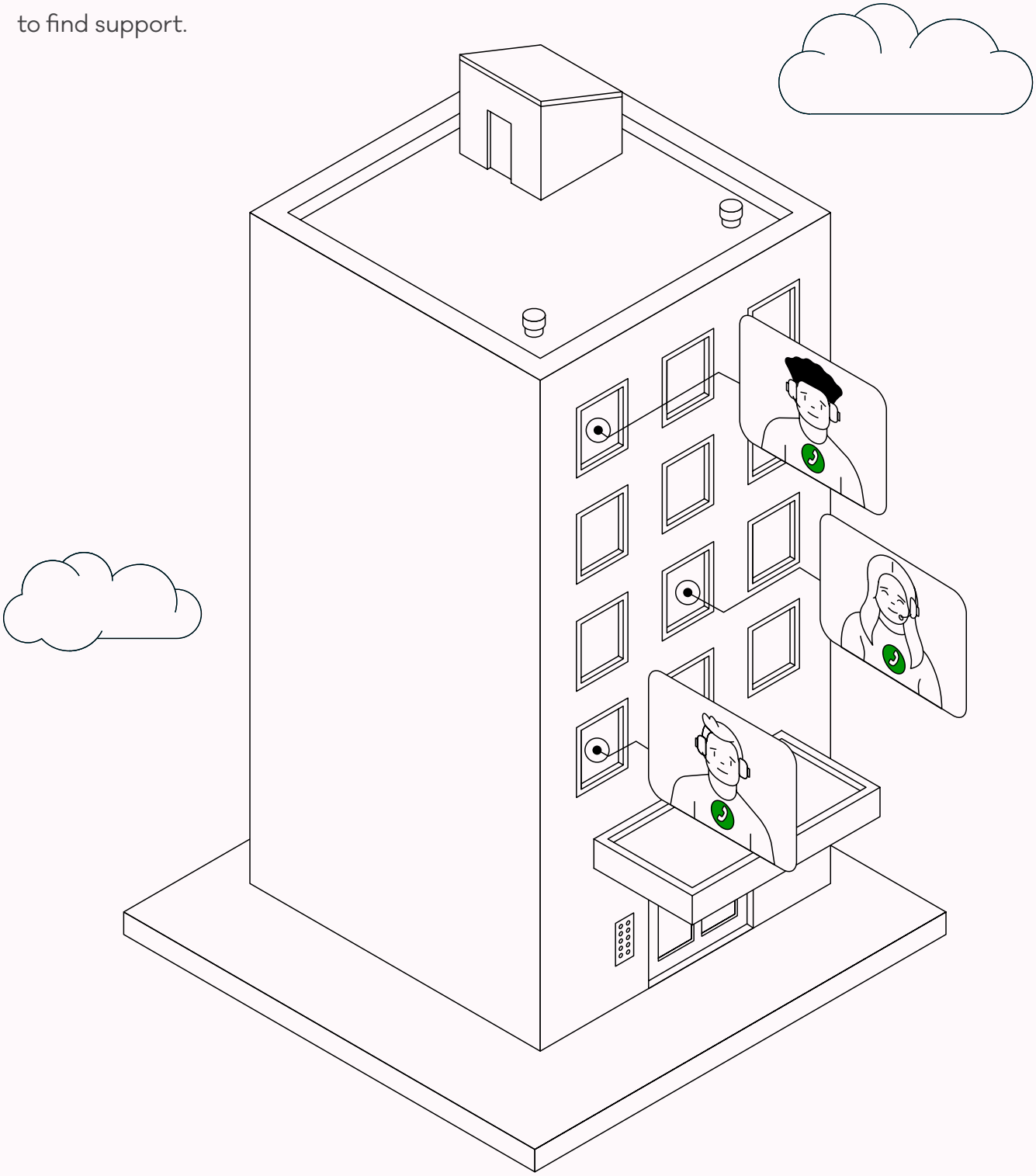
Other resources

Information on loneliness and signposting options

Read Mind's website section on loneliness, exploring the causes of loneliness, how it relates to mental health, what you can do if you are experiencing loneliness, and where to find support.

How to recognise and support someone who may be lonely

Read this advice by Samaritans on how to support someone who may be experiencing loneliness.



Support services for adults

Samaritans

Samaritans are open 24/7 for anyone who needs to talk.

Call: **116 123** (free)
Email: jo@samaritans.org
Post: Freepost SAMARITANS LETTERS

The Samaritans Self-Help app is a tool to track how you're feeling and receive tips on things you can to do to look after yourself.

Samaritans also have a Welsh Language Line on **0808 164 0123** (7pm–11pm every day).

Hub of Hope

Hub of Hope is a UK-wide mental health service database, allowing you to search for local, national, peer, community, charity, private and NHS mental health support. You can filter results to find specific kinds of support.

Mind

Mind offers advice, support and information to people experiencing mental health difficulties, and their family and friends.

InfoLine: **0300 123 3393**

Lines are open Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm (except bank holidays).

Email info@mind.org.uk

Side by Side

Side by Side, hosted by Mind, is an online community where you can listen, share and be heard. The online community is moderated to keep the community safe and supportive.

Other resources

Here is a list of free helplines there to support you if you are experiencing loneliness.

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Supporting your pupils with feelings of loneliness

Classroom-based activities

Emotional loneliness

Support pupils to understand, accept and express their feelings.

Activity session on expressing feelings
Written by Samaritans, this activity session covers the risks and benefits of expressing feelings; how to express feelings in different ways using written words; and how poetry and other creative channels can help to express feelings.

Social loneliness

Support pupils to build their support networks with others.

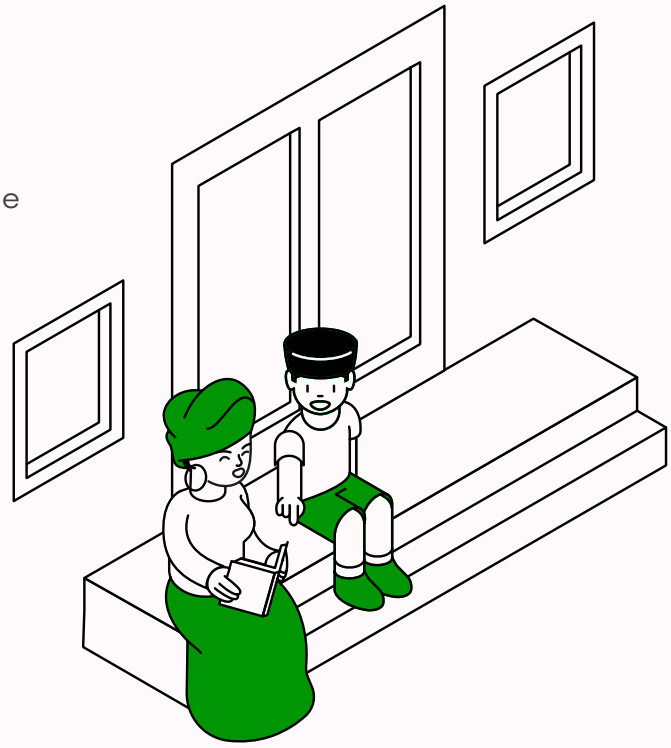
Trolling and cyber-bullying resources
From BBC Teach secondary resources, this short video can be used to explore the consequences of online bullying.

Lesson on developing listening skills
Written by Samaritans, this lesson focuses on improving listening skills by using the SHUSH listening tips.

Existential loneliness

Support pupils to connect with their wider communities.

Podcasts exploring mental health and our connections
Created by Place2Be for Children's Mental Health Week, use these podcasts to explore the theme of connection and mental health.



Resources for young people

MHF Tips for Young People on Loneliness

Share these top tip postcards, written by the Mental Health Foundation, to support young people to feel less lonely.

The #UnlockLoneliness campaign

Encourage pupils to engage with the #UnlockLoneliness campaign, which aims to raise awareness of loneliness in young people, provide tips to manage feelings of loneliness, and actions that the government can take to address loneliness.

Understanding loneliness guide

Share this guide by Young Minds on what loneliness is, how to reduce feelings of loneliness, and blogs from young people on their experiences of loneliness.

Youth loneliness statistics and facts

Share this article by Young Scot outlining the recent statistics and facts on loneliness from research and reports.

Top tips for tackling loneliness

Share these tips by Young Scot on supporting yourself when feeling lonely, written by a young person.

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Support services for young people

The Mix

The Mix offers online information as well as helpline support to under-25s about anything that's troubling them.

Email: via their **online contact form**

Call: **0808 808 4994** (free)

Telephone services available 4pm – 11pm everyday.

Text: **THEMIX to 85258**

The text service is free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK.

One-to-one chat: Free **1-2-1 webchat service**

The webchat is available 4pm – 11pm, Monday to Saturday.

Childline

A support service for anyone under 19 in need of support.

Call: **0800 1111** (free)

Telephone services available 24-hours a day, every day.

Young people can **sign up** for a free Childline locker (real name or email address not needed) to use Childline's free **1-2-1 counsellor chat** and email support service.

Shout

A support text service, available 24-hours a day, every day.

Text: **SHOUT to 85258**

Supporting staff and pupils within school

Resources

Article on improving mental health awareness at school

Read this article on why mental health awareness is important in your school and ways to build it in to school life.

Advice on developing empathy-based classrooms

Watch this short video describing how to have an empathy-based classroom.

Training on mental and emotional health in schools

Sign up to this free CPD certified online course helping school staff recognise and respond to signs of poor mental health and support their own and other's emotional health, increasing mental wellbeing in schools.

Mental Health Foundation

Fundraising for mental health awareness

Hold a 'Wear it Green Day' for Mental Health Foundation

The green ribbon is the international symbol of mental health awareness.

Whether you go all out in head to toe green or show your solidarity with one of our **green ribbon pin badges.**

Holding a 'Wear it Green' day is a great way to get the whole school involved and talking about mental health.

Download our **Wear it Green Day Fundraising Pack** and our **Wellbeing and Schools Fundraising Pack.**

We'd love to hear about your Wear it Green Day!

Get in touch with the team to let us know your plans: **events@mentalhealth.org.uk**

We can also send collection tins and fundraising materials.

How to send the money to the Mental Health Foundation:

You can go to the Mental Health Foundation's **online donation page** or

Send a cheque payable to Mental Health Foundation to: **Mental Health Foundation, Studio 2, 197 Long Lane, London SE1 4PD**

If you'd like us to send you a paying in slip, please email **events@mentalhealth.org.uk** and this can be organised for you.

When sending us your donations, make sure you always bank the money yourself! Never send cash through the post, as it could get lost or stolen.

Thank you so much for your support!

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