

WELLBEING

# LONELINESS AWARENESS WEEK

## 14th – 18th June



**A recent survey from the Mental Health Foundation shows that 24% of adults in the UK had feelings of loneliness during the Covid-19 pandemic.**

Loneliness was higher in young people, people who are unemployed, students, and single parents.

Loneliness Awareness Week aims to address the issues around loneliness, and highlight how it can affect our mental health.

### Understanding loneliness

Feeling lonely can mean different things to different people, some people will feel that their need for social interactions are not being met while for others it is that feeling of emptiness and being disconnected from the rest of the world.

Being on your own can be a positive experience if it is under your control. But feeling like you have little or no support around you can have a serious impact on your mental health. Some of the effects of loneliness can lead to anxiety, depression, poor self-esteem and phobias.

### What are the signs of loneliness?

Loneliness signs and symptoms can differ depending on the person and their situation, but the main signs are:

**Sleep** - when people feel lonely, they tend to experience a change in their sleeping patterns, feeling more or less tired than usual.

**Spending money** - people who are feeling lonely may spend money on 'unnecessary' things to fill the void.

**Eating habits** - over-eating or under-eating are closely link to depression. Some people would console themselves by eating too much, while others would lose their appetite and find other ways to make themselves feel better.

**Communication** - inconsistency in communication patterns such as phoning and messaging more or less frequently.

**Physical health** - aside from sleep deprivation, loneliness can also lead to poor heart health and weakened immune system.

### Tips to combat loneliness.

It is possible to overcome loneliness, but it does require effort on your part for changes to happen. In the long run, taking that first step will help you feel happier and healthier.

**Speak to someone** - talk to friends, family or a healthcare professional. Loneliness is not limited to feelings of isolation. It is often linked to ongoing and deeply rooted negative thoughts about yourself that can eventually lead to more serious emotional and medical problems.

**Practice self-care** - when you are feeling lonely, make sure you are doing what you can to look after yourself. Pamper yourself with a long bath, meditate and exercise.

**Distract yourself** - find healthy

distractions like reading, listening to music or even watching your favourite series on TV. You can even start a project like decorating your home.

**Join a support group** - a support group online or in-person is a good way to meet new people especially those who are experiencing the same feeling of loneliness as you. Getting to know new people may not be easy, but it can be really comforting to know that you are not alone.

It has been a very challenging year for everyone, with our lives temporarily on hold due to lockdown. It's likely that a lot of us will be feeling lonely, especially those who have been isolating on their own.

For this year's Loneliness Awareness Week, take a moment to do something that makes you feel good about yourself. And if you know someone who is experiencing loneliness, then reach out to them whether it's over the phone or in person. Sometimes just a few minutes of your time can mean a lot to someone that really needs it.

Remember you are not alone, our **confidential helpline** is available 24/7, 365 if you need support. Alternatively, if you have access to **My Healthy Advantage**, you can view a variety of resources including our video series, **BrightTV**, featuring a variety of well-known names sharing their personal experiences with mental health.



TOPICAL

## 21st – 25th June: World Wellbeing Week

**Recent studies from The Health Foundation show that more than two-thirds of adults in the UK (63%), report feeling worried about how COVID-19 is affecting their wellbeing and 56% of adults in the UK report feeling stressed or anxious.**

World Wellbeing Week is held annually during the last week of June. The event aims to raise an overall awareness for the wide-ranging aspects of wellbeing.

Wellbeing is defined as the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy.

To acknowledge World Wellbeing Week, we have listed some strategies and activities that you can implement into your daily routine to improve your overall happiness and wellbeing,

### Exercise

Exercise is not only important for our physical health but also for our mental health. Exercising improves brain function and is known as a stress reliever, and can also reduce anxiety and depression. Exercising will increase your energy and have a positive impact on your quality of sleep. You don't need an expensive gym membership—why not go for a walk on your lunch break, or walk to the shops instead of driving?

### Connect with people

Connecting with people can reduce anxiety and depression, help us

regulate our emotions and lead to higher self-esteem and empathy. Seeing people we care about can instantly lift our spirits. There are many ways we can connect with people—why not join a new club or group activity, volunteer for a cause you care about, or even grab a coffee with an old friend?

### Meditate

Meditation can provide immediate relief from anxiety and stress and help improve focus and concentration. There are many ways we can introduce meditation to our daily routine. Spend five minutes sitting or lying in a comfortable position, shut your eyes and pay attention to the way you breathe. As you inhale, slowly count to four—hold this breath for a second—then breathe out, again counting to four.

### Shift perception

When we are in a bad mood, under stress, or worrying, we have more negative thoughts. If we can learn to spot these negative thoughts, we can challenge them, and come up with more balanced alternatives. Replacing negative thoughts with thoughts that are more balanced and helpful will allow us to appreciate life more.

### Do something nice

A nice gesture for someone else will not only increase their happiness, but it'll help you, too. It doesn't have to be a big gesture—you can buy someone a coffee or lunch. Take time out of your day to do something nice and see how your mood lifts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought us challenging and uncertain times. It is important, now more than ever that we are looking after our wellbeing.

During World Wellbeing Week try to incorporate at least one of the above into your daily routine, or think of other ways you can make improvements to your overall happiness and wellbeing.

Remember you are not alone.

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