

Loneliness and Staying Connected

Tips to Help You Avoid Isolation

Living alone can be difficult, especially if it follows death or divorce. But, being alone doesn't have to mean being lonely. While you may need time to grieve for lost loved ones, don't resign yourself to a life of isolation. Loneliness need not be an inherent part of life—no matter what your age. Here are some tips to help you stay connected:

Call on your social support network. Seek out those who care about you and let them know how you're feeling. Don't be afraid to reach out to friends and family. Enjoy the camaraderie of your friends, the youthfulness of children or grandchildren, or the company of people in your community. Make weekly dates that you can look forward to. Strengthen your relationships with colleagues from church, or family members with whom you've lost touch. Don't discount the importance of emotional support. Even the companionship of a pet can make a big difference.

Cherish shared experiences. Sometimes you may want to talk to someone who can understand what you've been through. Reconnect with siblings or long lost friends to chat about good times you've had together. Join groups with whom you have something in common. If you're dealing with the loss of a spouse, grief support groups are excellent places to express your feelings with others who have shared your experience.

Get busy! Create new memories—pursue a hobby or even a second career. What have you always loved to do? Now's the time to do it! Check out your local community center to see what classes and activities they offer. Volunteer—read to children at the library or show off your handyman skills by helping the high school shop class. Think of new ways to share your passions.

Can't get around much? If you have a disability or no longer drive, find out what transportation options are available in your area. Your local senior center may have a shuttle that can pick you up. There also may be car pools to take you to activities and group outings. Many local agencies provide in-home companionship services, such as delivering hot meals or doing simple errands.

Go high-tech. The convenience of the Internet makes it easy to stay in touch with family and friends or to take interesting college courses. There even are online support groups for those who have experienced a loss, as well as Web sites designed specifically for older adults or other age groups.

Focus on fitness. Poor health can lead to isolation, so do all you can to stay healthy. Exercise, eat nutritious foods and see your doctor regularly.

It's natural to feel lonely sometimes, but if you're concerned that your isolation is leading to depression, seek help. Speak with your doctor, or call Care24. Our caring professionals are available 24 hours every day.

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