



20% of adolescents may experience a mental health problem in any given year.



1 in 6 people report experiencing a common mental health problem (like anxiety and depression) in any given week in England.



50% of mental health problems are established by age 14 and 75% by age 24.



Loneliness is likely to increase your risk of death by 26%.



Loneliness and social isolation are associated with an increased risk of developing coronary heart disease and stroke.



Loneliness, living alone and poor social connections are as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.



Loneliness with severe depression is associated with early mortality and loneliness is a risk factor for depression in later life.



Loneliness is worse for you than obesity.



10% of children and young people (aged 5-16 years) have a clinically diagnosable mental problem, yet 70% of children and adolescents who experience mental health problems have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age.

Mental Health Awareness and Combatting Loneliness

Never before has it been more important to give mental ill health the time it deserves and break down the stigmas associated with this devastating and destructive illness that so many of us suffer with. As many people will be aware, one of the big contributing factors to mental ill health these days is loneliness. We know that loneliness is affecting more and more of us in the UK and has had a huge impact on our mental health, not least because of the pandemic and ongoing lockdowns we have all experienced. We know that our connection to other people and our community is paramount to protecting our mental health, and as such, we all need to work together to find better ways to tackle loneliness, both within ourselves and within others. Because reducing loneliness is a major step towards a more healthy society.

Processes for improving your mental health



Identify your personal signs of loneliness and show self-compassion. It's important to notice and normalise when we feel lonely. This will reduce our tendency to deny or suppress the feeling out of embarrassment or shame. It will also increase our motivation to address this issue. Look at it like this: Loneliness is a bit like feeling hungry and thirsty. Much the same as when our bodies are telling us that we need to eat or drink something, loneliness is a sign that we need to pay attention to the amount of social contact we're having.

Stop scrolling. Avoid mindless scrolling on your phone and especially avoid comparing your social life to others purely through what you see on social media. Next time you are tempted to reach for your phone to go on social media, say to yourself, "stop" and ask yourself these two questions, "Why am I reaching for my phone?" and, "What emotions am I feeling?" Guide yourself into an easy breathing rhythm and allow yourself to feel your emotions for a minute or two, with as much compassion as you can. Switching mindless social media scrolling for a more mindful activity is a quick, yet positive step to avoid feeling isolated in our busy world.

Think about the impact of loneliness on your life and your personal needs. Ask yourself if, and indeed how, loneliness has been affecting your life. Has it been impacting your health? Sapping your energy levels? Impacting your appetite or sleep? Is it impacting your concentration? Then identify your personal social

needs in terms of format, level, frequency, and style of contact. Some people prefer face to face meetings, but others may like phone calls or online groups to chat. One person may enjoy the excitement of a busy social life, but another person may find it overwhelming or distracting. It would help address your needs better, if you reflect on what you genuinely want and what is missing at that specific moment.

Reach out for support. Once you are clear about your unfulfilled social needs, you can start to think about ideas regarding how to fill in these gaps with more concrete action plans. Don't be afraid to ask for help or speak to a professional. Taking that first step and asking for help is a positive move and demonstrates your strength as an individual. You could also contact your GP or local mental health care services for social prescribing, psychological support and other appropriate treatments. Think about the impact of loneliness on your life and your personal needs. Ask yourself if, and indeed how, loneliness has been affecting your life. Has it been impacting your health? Sapping your energy levels? Impacting your appetite or sleep? Is it impacting your concentration? Then identify your personal social needs in terms of format, level, frequency, and style of contact. Some people prefer face to face meetings, but others may like phone calls or online groups to chat. One person may enjoy the excitement of a busy social life, but another person may find it overwhelming or distracting. It would help address your needs better, if you reflect on what you genuinely want and what is missing at that specific moment.