



## Combating loneliness during the holidays

Did you know...

Last year 1.3 million older people expected they'd feel lonely at Christmas\*

5 million older people say a phone call from a friend or loved one would help them this Christmas time\*

More than a third of people are too embarrassed to admit they are lonely at Christmas\*\*

45% of adults feel 'occasionally', 'sometimes' or 'often' lonely in England\*\*\*



## Nine ways to ward off loneliness

**Whatever your setup around the festive season is, it's possible that feelings of loneliness will come in at some point.**

It's not unusual that the focus and pressure on togetherness and merriment at this time of the year can trigger negative emotions, particularly for those who live or work alone.

Our mental health experts have shared their advice on how you can manage feelings of loneliness during this time:



### 1. Acknowledge your feelings

Know that it's OK to feel lonely. Recognise and accept your feelings without judging yourself.



### 2. Keep a routine

Creating a routine and maintaining it will help to give you certainty at a time when things may feel out of control.



### 3. Use breathing techniques throughout the day

Simple breathing techniques help to keep you grounded and reduce anxiety caused by uncertainty.



### 4. Intentionally choose activities that bring you joy

Activities could include anything from putting great music on whilst you cook or picking up a coffee before you start work one morning.



### 5. Take a break from social media

It can be triggering to see families and loved-ones together during the holidays on social media, not just for those who are alone but also those whose setup doesn't match the ideals we often see online.



### 6. Create traditions

Start new holiday traditions yourself. These can be as simple as watching your favourite movie, baking, or heading to a Christmas market.



## 7. Step outdoors

Movement can be a great way to interrupt negative thinking. Step outdoors and connect with the community around you - whether that's going for a walk, heading to the local coffee shop or popping round to a neighbour's house.



## 8. Volunteer on key holiday dates

You may find a sense of enrichment by volunteering. Helping others isn't just beneficial to those who receive the support, but it's beneficial to the giver, too. Helping others can provide a sense of purpose and connection.



## 9. Ask for help

If loneliness is causing significant distress or impacting your mental health, consider talking to a therapist or counsellor who can provide support and guidance.

## Don't suffer in silence. Experts are out there to support you

It can be really tricky to ask for help but it's important to know there are experts and charities out there to support you during this time:

### Mind

Mental health charity offering information and signposting service via its infoline – call 0300 123 3393 or visit [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

### Samaritans

Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you. The Samaritans are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year – call 116 123 or visit [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)





## Common signs of loneliness to look out for in others

Although loneliness is a common and normal human experience, it can be incredibly hard for someone to admit that they're feeling lonely.

With that in mind, it's helpful for us all to understand the signs of loneliness so we can support friends, family and colleagues when they need it.

Here are some common signals to look out for that may suggest someone is lonely:



They seem unproductive



They spend a lot of time on their own



They often dwell on the negatives



They seem to have lost joy in activities



They are engaging in risky behaviour such as alcohol or drug misuse



They don't respond to messages or answer calls



They are lacking motivation and have difficulty concentrating.

## How to support someone who you think may be lonely

If you think someone is lonely, there are many ways you can help them to ease some of those feelings:

### 1/ Reach out

If you know someone who may be feeling lonely, try to reach out and check in on them. A simple message or phone call can make such a big difference.

### 2/ Offer supportive listening

Sometimes all someone needs is someone to listen. Be an empathic and non-judgemental ear for them to share their feelings. Often simply knowing there is someone there to listen can bring relief to the person.

### 3/ Invite them to join you

If it's feasible, invite them to join your holiday celebrations or gatherings, even if it's virtually. Inclusivity can go a long way in making someone feel valued.

### 4/ Provide resources

Share resources like befriending services, helplines, mental health services or local support groups if they are open to seeking support.

### 5/ Respect their boundaries

Be mindful that not everyone may want to participate in festivities or social events. Respect their boundaries and offer support in a way that feels comfortable for them.

### 6/ Send a thoughtful gift

Consider sending them a thoughtful, personalised gift or card to let them know you are thinking of them.

### 7/ Be patient and persistent

Loneliness can be difficult to overcome, so be patient and persistent in your efforts to support someone. Loneliness often takes time to alleviate.