

Understanding loneliness



Loneliness is the feeling that comes from wanting more connection or closeness with others. It isn't just about being alone. You might feel lonely even when surrounded by people if those connections don't feel meaningful or supportive.

Loneliness can affect anyone at any stage of life. It's a personal experience that looks different for everyone. However it feels for you, it's important to remember that your feelings are valid, and support is available.

Around 1 in 4 Australians feel lonely.

1 in 3 Australians say they don't feel part of a group of friends.

55% of Australians lack companionship.

Signs & effects

Loneliness can feel different for everyone. Some common experiences include:



Feeling unseen or disconnected

Like you don't matter or can't quite connect with others.



Pulling away from others

Avoiding people or activities you used to enjoy.



Emotional exhaustion

Finding it hard to motivate yourself or keep up with everyday tasks.



Changes in sleep or appetite

Feeling tired all the time or noticing shifts in your eating habits.



Getting stuck in overthinking

Worrying that no one cares or feeling like you're better off alone.



Increased stress or tension

Feeling more on edge, frustrated, or emotionally drained.

Causes

Financial stress can build from lots of different experiences, such as:

Life changes

Losing someone close, moving to a new place, or starting a new stage of life like school, university, or retirement.

Difficulty connecting

Struggling with social anxiety, feeling excluded, or finding it hard to build meaningful relationships.

Isolation

Living alone, working remotely, having limited chances to meet others, or being told where you can go or who you can see.

Cultural or personal differences

Adjusting to a new country, language, or community, or feeling different from those around you.

Self-doubt

Worrying you're not good enough, fearing rejection, or feeling like others don't want to connect.

Spending too much time online

Social media can make it look like everyone else is connected and thriving, even when that's not the reality.

Experiencing loneliness is never your fault. Whatever the cause, there are ways to navigate what you're feeling. And remember, support is available every step of the way.

Recognising when and how loneliness shows up

Having a plan like below can help you prepare for situations that might lead to feelings of loneliness. This can make it easier to spot what's happening and respond in ways that support your wellbeing.

Loneliness management plan

Anticipate

What makes me feel lonely?

e.g., certain times of day, social media, being alone too much

Identify

How might I feel or respond?

e.g., unmotivated, overthinking, withdrawing from people

Manage

What small steps could help?

e.g., calling a friend, getting outside, taking a class, volunteering, joining a walking group or run club



Practical management strategies



Acknowledge your feelings

It's okay to feel lonely. Let yourself notice emotions without blaming yourself or thinking you 'should' feel differently.



Reconnect with others

Reach out to someone you trust, or try joining a group, class, or activity where you can meet people with similar interests.



Try a grounding technique

Holding a grounding object, using the five senses exercise, or taking slow, deep breaths can help calm your mind and body in the moment.



Limit social media time

Spending too much time online can make loneliness feel heavier. Small steps toward in-person or meaningful interactions can help.



Be kind to yourself

Building or rebuilding connections takes time. Go at your own pace and give yourself credit for every small step you take.



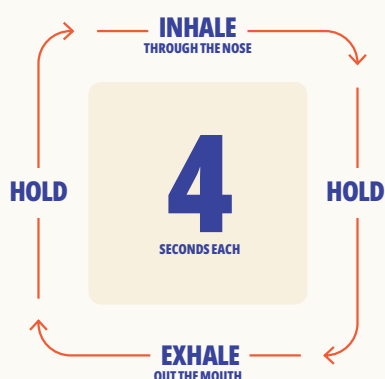
Write a letter to your future self

Putting your thoughts, hopes, and feelings into words can help you feel more connected to yourself and where you're headed.

Want to try something now?

If you're feeling lonely at this moment, small actions can help you feel more grounded. Try **box breathing**, **using your five senses**, or **journaling** your thoughts and feelings to shift your focus and reconnect with yourself.

BOX BREATHING



5 SENSES TECHNIQUE

Look for...



5 things you can **see**



4 things you can **feel**



3 things you can **hear**



2 things you can **smell**



1 things you can **taste**

JOURNAL YOUR THOUGHTS & FEELINGS



What's one emotion I'm feeling?

Where do I notice it in my body?

What might it be trying to tell me?



Everyone is different, so what works for someone else might not work for you, and that's okay.

The key is to keep experimenting until you find what helps you most.

Wherever you are, help is at your fingertips with the **Support Toolkit**

👉 lifeline.org.au/toolkit

When to seek help

You may want to speak with a health professional if:

- ✓ You feel lonely most of the time, and it's not improving.
- ✓ It's affecting your mood, self-esteem, or how you see the future.
- ✓ You're finding it hard to reconnect with friends, family, or activities you once enjoyed.
- ✓ You feel hopeless, overwhelmed, or like things will never change.
- ✓ You're withdrawing from people or responsibilities because loneliness feels too heavy.
- ✓ You're experiencing anxiety, depression, or thoughts of self-harm alongside loneliness.

Reaching out for support can feel difficult, but you don't have to face loneliness alone.

Support is available to help you feel more connected and hopeful.

Support is available

Understanding and managing loneliness isn't something you have to do on your own.

Head to our **Support Toolkit** to find more practical strategies and discover national and local support services that can help.

The Support Toolkit also offers information on a wide range of mental health and wellbeing topics you can explore at your own pace, whenever you need.

Visit lifeline.org.au/loneliness/services or scan the QR code to get started.



If you're feeling overwhelmed right now, Lifeline is here to support you.

You can reach us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

☎ Call 13 11 14

✉ Text 0477 131 114

💬 Chat online at lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat

If your life is in danger, please call 000.

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➡ lifeline.org.au/toolkit