**INFORMATION ABOUT: LONELINESS**

What is loneliness?

Loneliness can affect anyone, at any time - it doesn’t matter where we live, or whether we live with other people or alone. Some people experience loneliness occasionally, but others feel lonely all the time (chronic loneliness). Some of the ways loneliness can be experienced are emotionally (lacking a partner, close friends, or family), socially (poor social life and lacking chances to socialise), and existential loneliness (feeling alone even when you are with people you know).

What loneliness is NOT

Loneliness is not the same for everyone – your experience is not the same as the next person’s. You should not blame yourself for feeling lonely or be harsh on yourself for having these feelings. Loneliness is not something that has to last forever.

Symptoms of loneliness

Loneliness can impact on your feelings, your behaviour, and your physical wellbeing. It can affect your mood, make you feel isolated and that you have a lack of connection to other people. It can result in changes to your routines and behaviour (such as avoiding going out, not eating at mealtimes). Physical symptoms can include feeling nervous, lack of self-care, sleep issues and more.

What causes loneliness?

Sometimes there is a clear reason for feeling lonely, but occasionally there is no obvious cause and it’s just how we feel. Loneliness can occur after certain life events, such as after losing a loved one, after separation or divorce, or when grown-up children leave home. Other changes may cause us to feel more socially isolated, such as going to university, leaving a job, a chronic illness etc. Some mental health conditions, such as depression, can make you feel lonely.

What you can do to alleviate loneliness

* Keep in touch with family and friends:Regular chats, whether they are planned or in the moment, can help you feel less alone. Connection is easier in today’s world where you can make use of phones, email, video messaging and social media if face-to-face contact is difficult.
* Join a group or club: This is a good way to connect with others and it gives you a focus if you prefer some structure when meeting new people. You can look for groups to join in person by checking on local social media groups or community noticeboards. There may be online groups available if you cannot travel for any reason.
* Do things you enjoy:Whether in the home or out of it, doing things you like improves happiness and might be a way to stop you from focusing on your loneliness. If you can, spend time outdoors in green spaces, do some exercise or sport if you can, read, and listen to music, audiobooks, podcasts, or the radio to boost your mood and provide distractions.
* Volunteering to help others:Helping other people can give us a new sense of purpose and it can make us feel less lonely too. Volunteering is also a great way to meet people and boost your mental health wellbeing.
* *Consider speaking to a counsellor:**Talking openly about how loneliness feels for you, and how it impacts your life, can really help. Understanding our own reasons for feeling lonely and how to manage them can make a big difference to our mental health wellbeing.*

Useful Websites

<https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/health-impact/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/loneliness/about-loneliness/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/feelings-and-symptoms/loneliness-in-older-people/>