

LONELINESS IS HARD

**OVER
2/3**

of 11-17 year olds surveyed
by MHA felt stressed out
about loneliness.



**IT'S NORMAL TO FEEL
LONELY SOMETIMES.**

COMMON REASONS TO FEEL LONELY

- ▶ Moving to a new neighborhood
- ▶ Changing schools
- ▶ Your parents are getting a divorce
- ▶ Your older brother or sister moved out
- ▶ All your friends have boyfriends or girlfriends and you don't (yet!)
- ▶ Fights with friends
- ▶ Being bullied
- ▶ Seeing posts on social media about activities you weren't invited to

EFFECTS OF LONELINESS

When you're lonely a lot, it can affect you in many ways. You might:

- ▶ Feel more stressed;
- ▶ Sleep, but not feel rested;
- ▶ Stop taking good care of your appearance or hygiene;
- ▶ Find that your outlook on life has become negative;
- ▶ Start showing signs of depression or anxiety; or
- ▶ Turn to drugs or alcohol to feel better.



**YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE
ALONE TO FEEL LONELY.**

WHERE CAN YOU GET MORE HELP?

If you take steps to feel less lonely but find yourself still struggling to deal with day-to-day life, you may be experiencing the first signs of a mental health condition, like depression or anxiety.

Take the youth screen at [MHAScreening.org](https://www.MHAScreening.org) to see if you may be at risk. Once you get the results, MHA will provide you with more information and help you to figure out next steps.

10 THINGS YOU CAN DO IF YOU'RE LONELY

HELP OTHERS.

Volunteering is a great way to form meaningful connections with others and make new friends. It is also a natural way to add some purpose to your life—something a lot of us struggle with when feeling lonely. What are some causes that you're passionate about? Does your place of worship have volunteer activities? Is there a service club through your school?

RECONNECT WITH OLD FRIENDS.

Have you lost touch with a good friend from elementary school? Or maybe a friend from summer camp? See if you can reconnect! Especially if you're at a new school this year—just because you don't see someone every day doesn't mean they can't be a valuable friend.

TRY SOMETHING NEW.

Is there something you've always wanted to try, but never have? Now is the perfect time! If you're interested in acting, try auditioning for a school play or a local theater group. Love sports? Join a new team, or maybe there's a weekend clinic you can sign up for. There are tons of potential new hobbies out there!

FIGURE OUT IF SOMETHING IS MISSING IN YOUR LIFE.

There are a lot of different ways to feel lonely. Maybe you have a great group of friends, but wish you had one best friend to go to for everything. Or maybe you have one amazing friend, but miss being part of a group. Knowing what's missing won't magically make it appear, but it will make the overwhelming feeling of loneliness seem a bit more manageable and give you something to work toward.

MAKE TIME FOR EXTENDED FAMILY.

If you have cousins or other relatives around your age that are within a reasonable distance, reach out and try to get together.

WATCH SOMETHING THAT MAKES YOU LAUGH.

Put on your favorite funny show or movie—immersing yourself in a world with familiar characters can make you feel less alone.

TURN ACTIVITIES YOU DO ALONE INTO GROUP ACTIVITIES.

Into gaming? Invite someone over to play with you in person. Do you like to draw? Ask your parents to help you find an art class. Going to a baseball game with your family? See if they can get an extra ticket so you can invite a friend.

SPEND TIME WITH ANIMALS.

Hanging out with pets, especially cats and dogs, is a great way to feel less lonely. They will love you unconditionally and will provide you with all the snuggles you need! If you don't have pets of your own, see if your neighbors or relatives would be willing to let you hang out with theirs.

TRY AN APP.

Lyf is an app that helps you reach out to others to chat about things. Q Chat has support groups for LGBTQ youth. NotOK is an app that helps you reach out to contacts that you select to let them know that you are struggling. 7 Cups has trained listeners to provide you with emotional support.

WRITE DOWN 5 THINGS YOU LOVE ABOUT YOURSELF.

Part of the pain of loneliness is that you start to think of yourself negatively. Taking a few minutes to write down the good things you notice about yourself is a simple way to boost your self-esteem and remind yourself that you are awesome in your own way.

IN CRISIS?

Trained crisis counselors are available 24/7 by texting "MHA" to 741-741 or calling 1-800-273-TALK(8255).