

Managing Loneliness

All of us experience feelings of loneliness at times. These uncomfortable feelings can occur situationally or in circumstances such as a change in health, loss of a loved one, retirement or other life events. Acknowledging and managing loneliness may be critical in preventing these feelings from causing more serious mental and physical unwellness. This article explores a little further into the connection between loneliness and risks to health.

Some groups are at greater risk of loneliness including older adults. Older adults are frequently dealing with significant life changes and need to be aware of how to help prevent loneliness from creating further challenges.

Alone or lonely?

An article from the [National Institute on Aging](#) helps explain. “Much of what we know about the causes and effects of social isolation and loneliness comes from the groundbreaking [research](#) of the late John T. Cacioppo, Ph.D., former director of the Center for Cognitive and Social Neuroscience at the University of Chicago.”



The article continues, “Dr. Cacioppo’s research found that being alone and loneliness are different but related. Social isolation is the **objective** physical separation from other people (living alone), while loneliness is the **subjective** distressed feeling of being alone or separated. It’s possible to feel lonely while among other people, and you can be alone yet not feel lonely.”

Further information from [Healthline](#) also describes how chronic loneliness can have adverse biological effects on the body, in addition to the mental and emotional strain. It can lead to increased health risks.

Some of those increased risks include:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Dementia

How to manage loneliness

The first variable is to acknowledge and validate feelings of loneliness and share them. Share with trusted individuals, seek counseling or medical assistance if needed.

Then, there are basic steps to help manage loneliness that mirror some of the ways to help prevent illness of any kind and a few more tips as well.

- Good nutrition
- Exercise
- Meaningful activities
- Engagement with others
- Spend time in nature
- Volunteer (giving back can be very fulfilling and helpful in meeting others too)

Resources

This article in [Good Housekeeping](#) goes into more detail about ways individuals can help themselves engage in activities that offset feelings of loneliness.

Need more Help?

Feelings of loneliness were accelerated during the height of the pandemic and put many more at risk than before. Mental health professionals urge that if you or someone you know has suicidal thoughts or feelings of despair, please call 988, the Mental Health emergency line, available with crisis counselors 24/7. [Learn more about this helpline.](#)