



Mental Health Awareness Week 2022



The theme is loneliness.

SLIDE 2



What do we mean by loneliness?



Loneliness is often described as when we feel we do not have the meaningful relationships we want around us.

10%
of young people
say they often
feel lonely



Experiences of loneliness



Although we may all feel lonely from time-to-time, we are not all equally at risk of loneliness.





Short-term and long-term loneliness



Many of us will feel lonely from time-to-time.

Sometimes we can feel lonely for longer periods of time.

[add signposting options in your school]



Difference between feeling lonely and being alone



Social isolation

The physical separation from the people, and the things, that brings us comfort and support.



What is mental health?



Our mental health can change depending on our experiences and circumstances throughout our lives.





How can loneliness affect our mental health?



Watch here



SLIDE 8



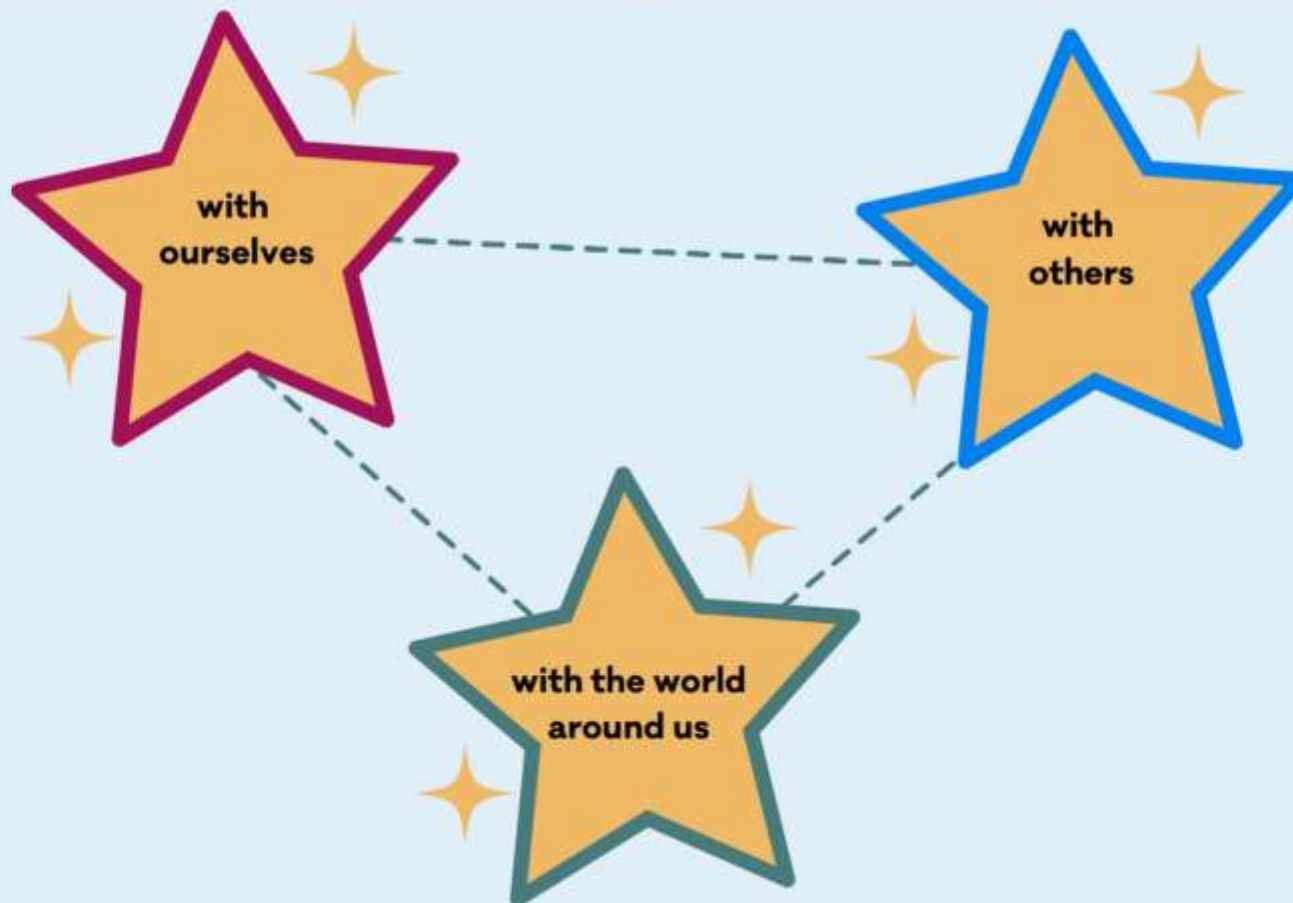
How can loneliness affect our mental health?



Although loneliness is not a mental health problem, it is an experience that can affect our mental health.



How can loneliness affect our mental health?



SLIDE 10



Connecting with ourselves



When experiencing emotional loneliness, finding ways to connect with ourselves can be helpful.



Connecting with ourselves



- Practice mindfulness
- Listen to music and dance
- Journal
- Practice yoga
- Paint
- Try something new
- Do something that you are good at





Connecting with others



Social loneliness is feeling like you do not have the supportive relationships you would want, in your life.

It can take time to build meaningful connections with others.





Connecting with others



- Call or text a friend
- Offer a hug to someone we care for
- Do an activity with someone
- Join a new club or activity
- Speak to a trusted adult





Connecting with the world around us



Existential loneliness is feeling a lack of connection to the world around us.





Connecting with the world around us



- Go for a walk
- Read a book or watch tv
- Take on a responsibility
- Show kindness to the world around us



Top tips for looking after ourselves when feeling lonely



Be kind to ourselves



SLIDE 17



Top tips for looking after ourselves when feeling lonely



Find ways of expressing how we feel





Top tips for looking after ourselves when feeling lonely



Talk to someone





Top tips for looking after ourselves when feeling lonely



Do things that we enjoy



SLIDE 20



Top tips for looking after ourselves when feeling lonely



**Spend time with those who
support us**





Top tips for looking after ourselves when feeling lonely



**Find people with similar interests
to us**





Top tips for looking after ourselves when feeling lonely



Be mindful of the media we look at



SLIDE 23



Top tips for looking after ourselves when feeling lonely



**Show gratitude and kindness to
ourselves and others**





Mental Health
Foundation



THANK YOU!



TIP 1: MORE AND BETTER SLEEP

Sleep is important to help our bodies and minds process, heal, and recover from the day. Although it is not always easy to achieve, good sleep is essential for our mental health and wellbeing. Good sleep isn't just about the number of hours of sleep we get, it is also important that our sleep is good quality.

Read our ['Taking Sleep Seriously'](#) report to find out more about the importance of sleep for our mental health and download our ['Finding our confidence with sleep School Pack'](#).



Here are five top tips to try:

1. Don't get caught napping!

If you feel tired during the day, try not to nap. Get up and walk around, head outside and get some fresh air, or do something challenging for a short while, like a crossword or a Sudoku.

2. If you're not tired, break the cycle.

If you're finding it difficult to get to sleep, or wake up in the night, try not to 'clock watch'. This can encourage the mind to believe that this is the time you should be waking up and can create an unhelpful pattern. Get up for a few minutes and get a drink, and go back to bed when you're feeling a bit sleepier.



3. Create a bedtime routine

Create a wind down routine in the hour before bed. Try to limit screen time, work or physical activity and put in activities to calm the mind such as reading, listening to relaxing music or journaling.



4. Don't stress it!

Thinking about sleep too much or trying to force yourself to sleep will only keep you awake. Learning how to relax both your body and mind instead will help you to get to sleep much more easily.

5. Keep a sleep diary.

Create and use a sleep diary that records the timing, quality and quantity of their sleep. This gains a more realistic idea about the type of sleep you are getting and can help to plan how to get better quality sleep.

Check out our ['How to... sleep better'](#) guide for more helpful advice.



TIP 2: UNDERSTAND AND MANAGE FEELINGS

An important step in staying mentally healthy or improving our mental health is understanding our feelings and learning strategies, such as mindfulness, to manage difficult feelings.

Mindfulness is the skill of paying attention to what is happening in your mind and body right now, without judgement. Thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations come and go. Mindfulness is the skill of simply noticing them passing through your mind, and not getting caught up with them. In doing so, we can enjoy our experiences

more, identify problems early and make changes if things don't feel right. If we understand our personalities, our habits and choices, we can plan ahead to reduce stress and play to our strengths.



Check out our podcast on '[What is mindfulness?](#)' podcast and our '[How to look after your mental health with mindfulness](#)' guide to understand more about how mindfulness can be used to manage our emotions.



It may be helpful to think about and use these tips:

1. What helps you feel calm?

Explore what helps you to look after and respond to the different emotions you can feel, both in the moment, and after an experience. Sometimes it can be a bit of trial and error to find ways of managing our emotions. It is important to find what supports us, which may look different to what supports others, and that's ok.

2. Talk to someone

Talking about your feelings can help you stay in good mental health and be a way of finding support when you



are struggling with your mental health. Talking about your feelings isn't a sign of weakness; it's part of taking charge of your wellbeing and doing what you can to stay healthy. Talking can be a way to cope with a problem you've been carrying around in your head for a while. Feeling listened to can help you feel more supported.

3. Ask for help

None of us are superhuman. We all can sometimes feel overwhelmed by how we feel. It is important to reach out to others – family, friends, professionals – when our feelings feel too much for us.

It's never too late to develop the skills and coping strategies to manage

difficult feelings, whether this is done independently or with the help of a professional, like a counsellor or a therapist. We will need to continually practice such skills and will likely need to develop new ways of coping as we face new experiences.

Check out MHFs ['How to... look after your mental health'](#) guide for more helpful advice.

**I DON'T
FEEL
MYSELF**

**WANT
TO TALK
ABOUT IT?**



TIP 3: LOOK FORWARD TO SOMETHING

Research suggests that people feel better when they plan and do activities that they enjoy and find relaxing. Different people enjoy different things, so choose activities that you like and find relaxing.

As well as having regular times that you do things you enjoy, try to plan things to look forward to after periods of stress too.



Here are tips to help build in moments to look forward to:

1. Setting time aside

Set time aside each week or an activity that is something you enjoy. Often activities we enjoy are ones that we are good at. Achieving something can boost our confidence and self-esteem, which are both linked to good mental health.

2. Try something new

It's important to stay open to new experiences. We all have activities we enjoy, but our mental health can also be positively impacted by trying new things.



3. Short but sweet

Start off by doing something that brings you joy, that you can look forward to, for 5 minutes a day.

Read our [**'Rethinking Rest'**](#) guide for tips of how to build in pockets of rest into your time.



TIP 4: SPEND TIME IN GREEN SPACES

Connecting with nature is not just about the amount of time we spend outdoors; it is also about building a relationship with nature by noticing and becoming sensitive to what is around us.

We use our senses to do this– such as noticing the different cloud shapes in the sky, smelling the scents of flowers and listening to the birds chirping in the trees.

Read our ['Nature: How connecting with nature benefits our mental health'](#) report and listen to our ["How sleep and green space can help your mental health"](#) podcast to find out

more about the benefits of connecting with nature for our mental health.





1. Start small

It is important to build in small moments when we can connect with the nature around us. Try to spend five minutes paying attention to nature every day.

2. Do what works for you

Connect with nature by doing things you enjoy. Try a few different things and see what you like – you can always try something new!

3. Switch off

Having a phone is very handy, especially when exploring new places. Yet we can find it difficult to switch off from our devices and social media, especially if we receive notifications! It can be hard to do but, why not pop your phone on “silent” and enjoy the sounds of nature instead?



4. Ask for company

Natural environments can be good places to connect with others. Sometimes, it can be fun to explore new places with friends or family.

5. Use all your senses

Try and use all your senses when exploring your environment – this will help you feel more connected to nature.

Check out our ['Connect with Nature School Pack'](#) and our ['Thriving with Nature'](#) guide for more helpful advice.



TIP 5: HAVE A HEALTHY DIET

What we eat can impact how we feel physically, but also how we feel mentally too. Getting a balanced diet with all the nutrients we need is important for our development from a young age. It's also important to eat foods that provide us with a steady amount of energy through the day, rather than short "bursts" of energy.

Listen to our ['Wellbeing and nutrition'](#) podcast, which introduces how a good nutritious diet can help mental health.



Here are few top tips on connecting our diet with our mental health:

1. Try to be balanced

Eating a healthy, balanced diet is an important part of maintaining good physical and mental health. Try to eat a wide variety of foods, in the right proportions, across the different food groups.

2. Notice how foods and drinks can make you feel

Certain foods and drinks can change the way we feel, due to the chemicals impacting how our brain functions. For example, caffeine, which is found in things such as coffee, chocolate, cola and other

manufactured energy drinks, is a stimulant. This means, although it may give you a quick burst of energy, it can often increase feelings of anxiousness and impact our sleep routine. Try to avoid caffeine before bedtime and switching to decaffeinated options during the day.



3. Check in with your gut

Research has also shown that our gut can reflect how we're feeling: if we're stressed, it can speed up or slow down. Try to include healthy foods for our gut, such as fruit, vegetables, beans and probiotics, into daily meals.

4. Sharing meals with other people

There are many psychological, social and biological benefits of eating meals with other people. They give us a sense of rhythm and regularity in our lives, a chance to reflect on the day, and feel connected to others.

Check out MHF's ['Diet and mental health'](#) page for more helpful advice.



TIP 6: HELP OTHERS

Kindness is choosing to do something for ourselves or others, that is motivated by genuine, warm feelings. Research suggests that being kind not only helps others, but also has benefits for our own mental health and wellbeing.

Read our ['Doing Good Does You Good'](#) guide to explore more.



Top tips for showing kindness:

1. Keep others in mind

Being kind includes considering the feelings of others. Finding ways of showing kindness that are based on what others need or want, rather than what we assume will be most helpful.

2. Pace yourselves

It's very easy to give away all our energy by focusing on others. Remember that kindness starts with you – taking time to be kind to yourself will help you to build up more energy for showing kindness to others.





3. Start small

Start small, so you do not become overwhelmed or give more than you can. Helping others doesn't have to cost money or take a lot of time.

4. Do something you enjoy

Share your skills and interests with others as a way of showing kindness.

5. Remember that we all need kindness

Think of people around you that you could show kindness to, such as other people in your family, school or community.

Check out our '[Why Kindness Matters](#)' school pack for more helpful advice and our '[Random Acts of Kindness](#)' page for inspiration on what you can do.





TIP 7: BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE



Physical activity has a huge potential to enhance our wellbeing. Even a short burst of 10 minutes' brisk walking increases our mental alertness, energy and positive mood. Participation in regular physical activity can increase our self-esteem and can reduce stress and anxiety. It also plays a role in preventing the development of mental health problems and in improving the quality of life of people experiencing mental health problems.



Tips to help you get started:

1. Making it part of daily life

Adopting a more active lifestyle can be as simple as doing daily tasks more energetically or making small changes to your routine, such as walking up a flight of stairs.

2. Start slowly

If physical activity is new to you, it's best to build up your ability gradually. There are many apps and social networks accessible for free to help.

3. Goals

It's important to set goals to measure progress, which might motivate you.

Check out MHF's '[How to... look after your mental health using exercise](#)' guide for more helpful advice.



TIP 8: BUILD & MAINTAIN POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are one of the most important aspects of our lives, yet we can often forget just how crucial our connections with other people are for our physical and mental health and wellbeing.

People who are more socially connected to family, friends, or their community are happier, physically healthier and live longer, with fewer mental health problems than people who are less well connected.

It's not just the number of friends you have, and it's not whether or not you're in a committed relationship, but it's the quality of your close relationships that matters.



1. Get to know yourself

Take the time to appreciate yourself and get in touch with your emotions to be able to express yourself clearly and more effectively. Not knowing how to regulate your emotions and express them healthily can negatively affect your mental wellbeing.

2. Put in the work

Healthy relationships are not found, but built. A healthy relationship needs commitment and willingness to be accommodating to each other's needs.

3. Set and respect boundaries

Setting boundaries is not only about what you don't want or like in your relationships,

but also about letting the people around you know what you appreciate. Think about, and let others know where your boundaries are, e.g. respecting your time alone. Doing this can take the pressure off your relationship to commit to anything unrealistic.



4. Talk and listen

All relationships have disagreements and that's ok. what matters is how you talk and listen to one another. Don't be afraid to express your emotions or vulnerabilities with people you trust. Listen to understand, rather than listening to respond.

5. Let go of control

A lot of life is about how we react to our experiences and encounters. Knowing that you can only really control what you do and not what anyone else does will save you time and stress.

6. Reflect and learn

If you have a healthy way of expressing your feelings, you're able to react to other people's

in a healthy way. Being angry with someone, often comes from a place of feeling hurt and upset. if you can recognise that, you can communicate it, and build better relationships with others. Reflect on the relationships that work best in your life, what qualities do these relationships have, and how can you bring these qualities into other relationships?

Check out MHF's '[Relationships in the 21st Century](#)' report and '[Healthy Relationships Campaign](#)' for more helpful advice.



HEALTHY

RELATIONSHIPS



RESOURCES



Here is a list of signposting options that can support your pupils with their mental health and wellbeing, as well as your own.

- **Childline** can be contacted on 0800 1111 to provide free support, whatever the worry.
- **Samaritans** offer a free listening service, day or night, on 116 123, or you can e-mail jo@samaritans.org.uk
- **Shout** offers a confidential 24/7 crisis text support service, just text: 85258:
- **Every Mind Matters** is a platform to help individuals think about ways to support their own mental health. You can develop a personalised plan just for you.

