

Coping with Loneliness and Isolation in the LGBTQIA+ Community

Objective

To reduce loneliness and isolation and increase genuine connections with others.

What to Know

Feelings of loneliness and isolation are common in the LGBTQIA+ community. Perhaps you experience one or several of these types of isolation:

- **Social isolation.** You cannot talk to anyone about your sexuality; includes four sub-dimensions:
 - lack of social support
 - no contact with LGBTQIA+ community
 - social withdrawal
 - victimization
- **Emotional isolation** – occurs if you feel emotionally distant or separated from social networks, including your family
- **Cognitive isolation** – lack of access to LGBTQIA+-specific information or role models, or much of the information you are exposed to is negative and harmful (reinforcing feelings of isolation)
- **Concealment of identity** – you are “in the closet” and try to conform to heteronormative expectations
- **Recognition you are different from heteronormative society** – believing you are “different” can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation
- **Minority stress** – experiencing homophobia (active or passive) from family, friends, and the society or culture

Loneliness and isolation in the LGBTQIA+ community is directly connected to problems with physical health, homelessness, and suicide risk, as well as elevated rates of depression, mood disorders, self-harm, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and substance abuse. Due to the risks associated with isolation and loneliness, it is essential that you address your feelings. This worksheet will help you reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation and increase genuine connections with others. Here are some suggestions.

Admit to yourself and others you are lonely. Be open and honest about how you feel. Reaching out and being vulnerable can help you form more intimate relationships.

Join clubs or athletic groups that meet regularly. It is much easier to become friends with people you see on a regular basis.

Try something new. A new hobby will introduce you to a new community of people with similar interests and spice up your routine. You might volunteer for a cause that is important to you.

Get closer with your acquaintances. Make a list of acquaintances and potential friends you already know. Perhaps you can deepen your connection with someone in less time because you have a pre-existing relationship.

Make good use of alone time. Be sure you are meeting your basic self-care needs. Some things you can do include the following ideas.

- Make your living space comfortable, functional, and nurturing.
- Reorganize your closet space or other cluttered spaces.
- Find ways to make your space more enjoyable and comfortable (new pillows, rugs, or accessories)
- Decrease social media use if you find you are using it for self-comparison, self-hatred, or if you feel “addicted” to your electronic device.
- Take yourself on outings or “dates.”

If you abuse substances, get help. Using alcohol or drugs might make you feel more confident, but over time it will make you feel lonelier and more isolated. Seek out support groups like AA or NA, which often have LGBTQIA+ meetings.

Seek professional help. You will learn to deal with your feelings of loneliness and increase your confidence and self-esteem. Group therapy is also an option where you can connect with other LGBTQIA+ people to learn more about yourself and how you relate to others.

Join a support group. To find local and national support organizations, use [GLBTNearMe.org](https://www.glbtnearme.org). Some other online resources include

<https://www.emptyclosets.com>

[https://www.dailystrength.org/categories/Lesbian Gay](https://www.dailystrength.org/categories/Lesbian_Gay)

<https://www.trevorspace.org/> (young people)

Avoid “hooking up” in clubs or via apps, which are not designed for the creation of close relationships. Apps like Grindr may provide you with some relief from your loneliness, but it is a temporary fix.

If you are feeling lonely, reach out because it is likely the person you are reaching out to has also felt lonely. This worksheet will help you reduce your feelings of loneliness and isolation while increasing genuine connections with others.

What to Do

For the next two weeks, do one thing each day to reduce your feelings of loneliness. Write down the date and rank your feelings of loneliness and isolation, where 1 = I don’t feel too lonely, to 10 = the loneliest I have ever felt. Write down what you did and how you felt after doing the activity.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
