

# Finding support for loneliness and isolation



Loneliness and isolation aren't just unpleasant. They can affect both your mind and body. Many people experience them, especially after life changes like retirement, moving house, illness, or loss. These moments can disrupt your routines and support networks.

If you're feeling lonely, you're not alone – and you don't have to face it on your own. Support is available to help you feel more connected. You can speak with your GP or contact LiveUp's Navigators to find social programs near you.

## Why social connection matters for your health

Staying socially connected supports your health in many ways, especially as you age.

Research from the World Health Organisation shows social isolation can increase your risk of chronic disease and early death – even as much as smoking or obesity.

It's about more than just having company. Social connection affects your stress levels, memory, and even how you experience pain.

Feeling lonely isn't a weakness. It's a signal your body and mind need care. Just like hunger tells you it's time to eat, loneliness tells you it's time to connect.

# What's the difference between loneliness and social isolation?

**Social isolation** is when you have little or no social contact with others. This can lead to loneliness, sadness, or depression.

But even if you're surrounded by people, you can still feel lonely.

**Loneliness** is the feeling of being disconnected or missing deeper, more satisfying relationships.

## How to build deeper connections

Stronger relationships take time, honesty, and shared experiences. Try talking to someone close about how you're feeling. It could open the door to more meaningful connection.

You can also try finding shared interests with people you'd like to grow closer to. For example, you could explore a new hobby with grandchildren.

## Resources for building stronger relationships

Visit Ending Loneliness Together for more advice on how to build meaningful relationships. They also have tips to help you start deeper conversations.

You can also read Beyond Blue's booklet Connections Matter. It has a helpful planning guide, and ideas for staying connected when you're over 60.

## Where to get support for loneliness or isolation

There are programs and people who can help. You don't have to wait until things feel serious.



# Ready to connect? LiveUp can help

## Ask your GP

Your GP may refer you to group activities like gardening, art, or shared meals. This kind of referral is called social prescribing, and it's growing in Australia.

You don't need to be in crisis to ask – being proactive is part of good health.

## Access funded programs

If you're over 65, you may be eligible for government-funded support that includes help with social connection. For example, you can apply for friendly home visits through the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme.

These services exist because social connection is a health need, not a luxury.

## Use LiveUp's free resources

LiveUp's Navigators can help you find local activities and groups using the social activities database. Call us for free on 1800 951 971. We can also send you a summary of your results after the call.

# How technology can help you connect

Technology can help you stay in touch with loved ones who live far away.

You can also meet like-minded people in online communities that match your interests. Look for Facebook groups or forums based around something you enjoy, such as crafting or gardening.

For example, ConnectUp is the LiveUp Facebook community for sharing tips and ideas about healthy ageing.

# Can pets help with loneliness?

Spending time with animals (especially dogs) can:

- Lower stress and lift your mood
- Help ease feelings of loneliness
- Encourage movement and routine, improving your overall health

Can't own a pet? You can still enjoy time with animals. Some libraries, aged care services, and community centres offer animal visits.

# Take the first step today

## Here's what you can do next:

- Ask your GP about social programs
- Call LiveUp Navigators or browse the activities database
- If you receive CHSP services, ask if social support can be added
- Let someone close to you know how you're feeling – you're not burdening them

You don't have to push through loneliness on your own. Connection is part of staying well, and support is available to help you take that first step.

Explore LiveUp's social activities database or call 1800 951 971.

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## How to use this information

LiveUp provides free information to help you make informed decisions about your health. This information is for general and educational purposes only, is not intended to provide a comprehensive guide, and does not replace medical advice.

Everyone is different, so some of these tips may work better for you than others. You should use your own judgment and seek medical advice when applying this information to yourself, to determine if it is suitable in your circumstances. Your use of, or reliance on, this information is solely at your own risk. Independent Living Assessment Incorporated is not responsible or liable for any injury, loss, or damage caused as a result of your use of, or reliance on, this information.



Scan the QR code for more helpful articles and downloadable exercise sheets on the LiveUp website.

## Contact us

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