

Facing Loneliness As You Get Older

Human beings are social by nature--they thrive on meaningful social interactions with others. This is no different for older adults. Older adults, however, are often at risk for loneliness because of disruptions to their social networks over time. For example:

- their children may move to another city/country to find work
- grandchildren get older and become more involved in school and activities with friends
- spouses and friends may become ill or pass away
- retirement can reduce or put an end to workplace relationship
- personal disability, sensory loss or illness may prevent them from taking part in the activities with others that they used to enjoy
- some older people are no longer able to stay in their own home/familiar surroundings--they lose connections with friends and neighbours as a result

Tips to help prevent loneliness:

- Try to create opportunities for meaningful contact with other people.
- Nurture at least one close relationship with family or friends (where you feel emotionally connected and supported/can trust and can confide in the other person).
- Try to develop a network of friends and family rather than depending on only one or two.
- Think about joining groups or taking part in activities with others who share common interests.
- Remember, interactions with others don't have to be face-to-face to be meaningful--stay in touch with family and friends using other methods such as telephone, letters or e-mail.
- Spend time with a pet or think about getting a pet if you don't already have one. Keep in mind that taking care of a pet is a big responsibility and commitment. The benefits of having a pet for people living alone have been well documented.
- Think about joining a group to plan, shop, and cook meals, or eat out rather than eating alone.
- Explore the volunteer opportunities in your neighbourhood/city. Reaching out to help others who are in need or who are lonely can help to prevent you from getting lonely.
- Maintain connections with your spiritual community or consider becoming involved in one if this feels right for you.
- Mentor a young person to help them learn and grow.

- Look into housing options that allow for more contact with others.
- Think about going back to school.
- Join a fitness class that is appropriate for your level of physical ability.

If you're feeling lonely, yet find it hard to get out and get involved with others, ask yourself if you might be suffering from depression. Depression can take away your desire to do the things you used to enjoy, and keeps you from enjoying life to the fullest. Don't suffer in silence--see your doctor.

If you have trouble developing and maintaining positive relationships with others, take some steps to learn more about effective communication skills by reading, taking courses or seeing a counsellor.

Courtesy:

<http://www.thecareguide.com/Resources/ResourceDetails.aspx?section=HealthAndWellness&itm=671>

www.silverinnings.com