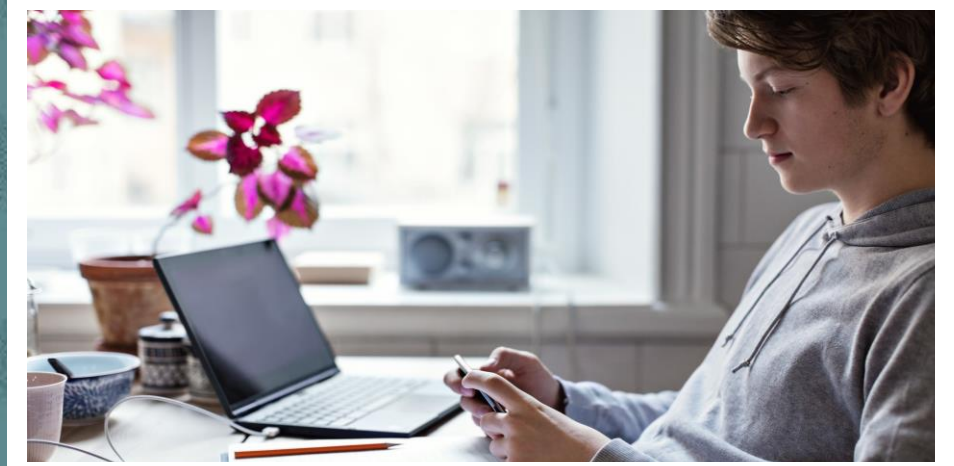


MINDFUL MOMENTS

MAY: LONELINESS IN A DIGITAL WORLD

Introduction

This year the theme of Mental Health Awareness Week is Loneliness. Loneliness is affecting more and more of us in the UK and it has had a huge impact on our physical and mental health during the Pandemic and onwards, with our work and personal lives becoming more digital than ever before. Our connection to other people is fundamental to protecting our mental health and wellbeing. Today we are raising awareness of loneliness in a digital world and the small steps we can take to try and manage these feelings.



Is loneliness a mental health condition?

Feeling lonely in itself isn't considered a mental health condition, however, research suggests that loneliness is associated with an increased risk of certain mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, as well as sleep and stress issues.

For individuals that are living with a mental health condition, this may feel isolating at times too, especially if they do not have professional support or peer support from those experiencing similar struggles.

A person's self-esteem can also influence how lonely they might feel throughout their lifetime. People who lack confidence or struggle with social anxiety may believe that others won't like them or won't enjoy spending time with them, which can mean it may feel easier to avoid social situations.

Low-self-esteem can also lead to a lot of negative social comparison, which can be very detrimental, especially when it comes to comparing our lives to those of others on the internet and social media.

What is loneliness?

Loneliness is not always the same as being alone and what might cause someone to feel lonely will vary from person to person. For example, you may work from home and be perfectly happy, while others may find this a lonely experience. Or you may be in a relationship and see friends often and still feel lonely – especially if you don't feel understood or cared for by the people around you. Loneliness isn't always easy to detect, especially when we are all behind screens and scrolling through social media where we can't always see the full picture.

Support Available

- Join an **online community for peer support** such as [Clic](#) or [Side by Side](#)
- Try a **befriender** service to make new connections
- **[Employee Assistance Programme](#)**
Qualified consultants provide practical, impartial support on all matters.
- Head to **[Mind for more tips on loneliness and to hear others' stories](#)**

Tips to help manage loneliness in a digital world

Try peer support- If you don't feel ready to open-up in person, talking to others online can be a great first step. There are amazing online communities which offer a safe space to share with others (see Support Available for links).

Remember that what you see online, isn't always reality- social media is the stuff people want us to see. If social media is negatively affecting you, try to reduce the amount of time you spend scrolling each day and mute or unfollow accounts that don't make you feel good.

Get involved- research suggests that actively getting involved in social media e.g., sharing and commenting can help us feel more included within a community, rather than just scrolling and feeling like an outsider looking in.

Take care of yourself- often when we feel lonely, we may feel down and begin to neglect our own needs. Taking time to look after yourself by eating regularly, getting enough sleep and having time away from your phone and screens can have such a positive impact on how you feel about yourself.