



**Do Now**

## Lesson 3: How can we help ourselves and others to combat loneliness?



Tiana has 4000 followers on Instagram, is getting popular on TikTok and also has a Facebook account with 500 friends too. She gets a lot of likes and shares on everything she posts. 'It's weird,' she thinks. 'Even knowing how popular I am, I still feel lonelier than ever.'

**Discuss:** Does being popular on social media mean you have lots of genuine friends in real life?



What does loneliness mean? Why do you think Tiana feels lonely?

*CLUES: isolation real human contact  
illusion sadness façade*

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## Learning outcomes:

Identify and articulate a range of emotions accurately and sensitively, using appropriate vocabulary.

Describe the characteristics of mental and emotional health and strategies for managing these.

Describe a broad range of strategies — cognitive and practical — for promoting emotional wellbeing, for avoiding negative thinking and for ways of managing mental health concerns.

### **Loneliness:**

A sadness felt because a person has no friends or company.

**Social isolation:** Social isolation is a state of complete or near-complete lack of contact between an individual and society



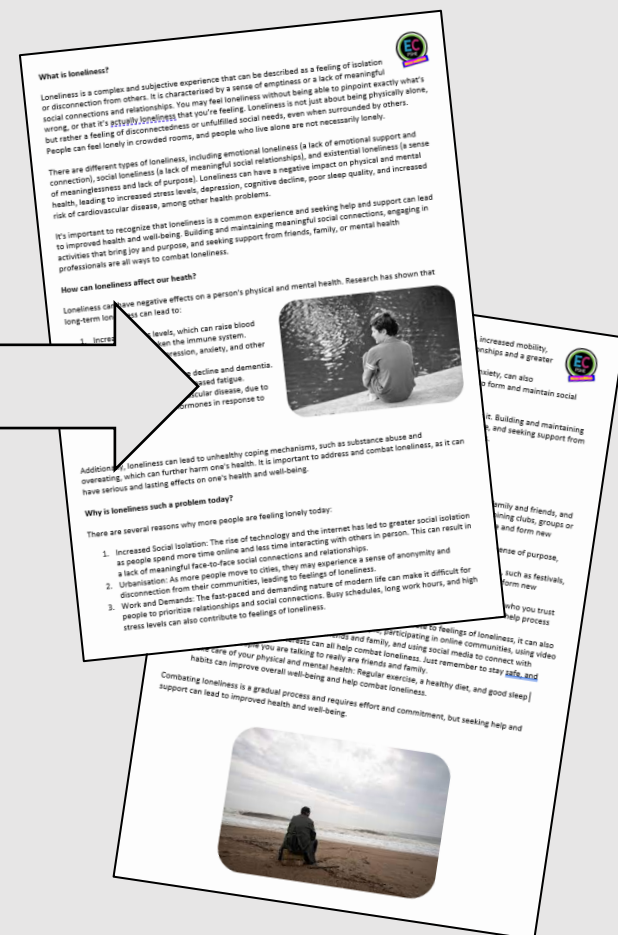
# How can we help ourselves and others to combat loneliness?



We will now read about why exactly more people are reporting feelings of loneliness than ever before, how this can affect our health and what can be done about it.

## THORNDEN THREE GUIDED READING

Follow the text in your booklets. Note down any questions on them you have for your teacher before we move on to the next task.



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## **What is loneliness?**

Loneliness is a complex and subjective experience that can be described as a feeling of isolation or disconnection from others. It is characterised by a sense of emptiness or a lack of meaningful social connections and relationships. You may feel loneliness without being able to pinpoint exactly what's wrong, or that it's actually loneliness that you're feeling. Loneliness is not just about being physically alone, but rather a feeling of disconnectedness or unfulfilled social needs, even when surrounded by others. People can feel lonely in crowded rooms, and people who live alone are not necessarily lonely.

There are different types of loneliness, including emotional loneliness (a lack of emotional support and connection), social loneliness (a lack of meaningful social relationships), and existential loneliness (a sense of meaninglessness and lack of purpose). Loneliness can have a negative impact on physical and mental health, leading to increased stress levels, depression, cognitive decline, poor sleep quality, and increased risk of cardiovascular disease, among other health problems.

It's important to recognize that loneliness is a common experience and seeking help and support can lead to improved health and well-being. Building and maintaining meaningful social connections, engaging in activities that bring joy and purpose, and seeking support from friends, family, or mental health professionals are all ways to combat loneliness.

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### **How can loneliness affect our health?**

1. Loneliness can have negative effects on a person's physical and mental health. Research has shown that long-term loneliness can lead to:
2. Increased stress levels, which can raise blood pressure and weaken the immune system.
3. Increased risk of depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues.
4. Increased risk of cognitive decline and dementia.
5. Poor sleep quality and increased fatigue.
6. Increased risk of cardiovascular disease, due to the release of stress hormones in response to loneliness.

Additionally, loneliness can lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse and overeating, which can further harm one's health. It is important to address and combat loneliness, as it can have serious and lasting effects on one's health and well-being.

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## **Why is loneliness such a problem today?**

There are several reasons why more people are feeling lonely today:

1. **Increased Social Isolation:** The rise of technology and the internet has led to greater social isolation as people spend more time online and less time interacting with others in person. This can result in a lack of meaningful face-to-face social connections and relationships.
2. **Urbanisation:** As more people move to cities, they may experience a sense of anonymity and disconnection from their communities, leading to feelings of loneliness.
3. **Work and Demands:** The fast-paced and demanding nature of modern life can make it difficult for people to prioritize relationships and social connections. Busy schedules, long work hours, and high stress levels can also contribute to feelings of loneliness.
4. **Changing Family Structures:** The rise of single-parent households, increased mobility, and decreased family sizes can lead to a lack of close family relationships and a greater risk of loneliness.
5. **Mental Health:** Mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety, can also increase the risk of loneliness, as they can impact a person's ability to form and maintain social connections.

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There are several strategies that can help combat loneliness:

1. **Build and maintain social connections:** Making an effort to spend time with family and friends, and engage in activities that bring joy and purpose, can help combat loneliness. Joining clubs, groups or organizations that align with your interests can also help you meet new people and form new relationships.
2. **Volunteer or give back to others:** Volunteering or helping others can provide a sense of purpose, increase self-esteem and help form new relationships.
3. **Get involved in your community:** Participating in community events and activities, such as festivals, charity events, and neighbourhood groups, can help you connect with others and form new relationships.
4. **Reach out to others:** If you are feeling lonely, reach out to friends, family, or others who you trust and enjoy spending time with. Some people may consider counselling or therapy to help process and manage feelings of loneliness.
5. **Make the most of technology:** While technology can contribute to feelings of loneliness, it can also be a tool to help connect with others. For example, participating in online communities, using video conferencing tools to connect with friends and family, and using social media to connect with others who share your interests can all help combat loneliness. Just remember to stay safe, and ensure the people you are talking to really are friends and family.
6. **Take care of your physical and mental health:** Regular exercise, a healthy diet, and good sleep habits can improve overall well-being and help combat loneliness.

**Why is it so important that we try to combat the epidemic of loneliness in the modern world? Make notes as you watch the clips, we'll go through the answers together afterwards.**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3Xv\\_g3g-mA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3Xv_g3g-mA)



What problems can loneliness cause?	Why do we need to combat loneliness?	How can we combat loneliness?

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**Let's share some of our ideas from the clip now, and any others you may have thought of yourself from your own experience or knowledge.**



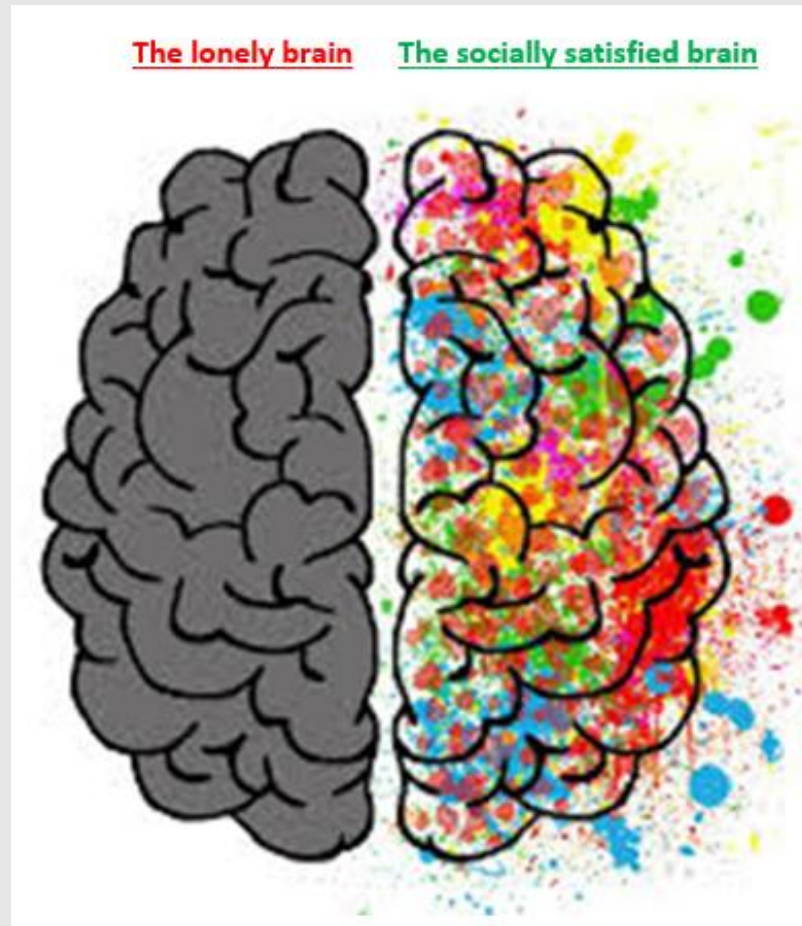
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<b>What problems can loneliness cause?</b>	<b>Why do we need to combat loneliness?</b>	<b>How can we combat loneliness?</b>
Social pain and hurt.	It's in our biology that we need to be round other people.	We need to firstly recognise that we are lonely
Feeling of isolation.	Your thoughts about the world change, which in turn changes your actions and feelings.	Check if we are concentrating too much on the negative
It makes you age quicker, it's as deadly as smoking.	It can end in depression if we don't	We need to risk being open and vulnerable again
It makes cancer deadlier and immune systems weaker	You pay more attention to others, but understand them less, it makes you distrustful	Try to reach out and get professional help
It can advance Alzheimer's disease.	Nothing can substitute our need for connection with each other.	Connect with a friend you haven't spoken to for a while or try a new event or sport



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How can we improve our mental health by turning lonely brains into socially satisfied brains?



Using your information from today and your own ideas, write a symptom of the lonely brain on one side and one idea of how we can work towards having a socially satisfied brain on the other.

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# Need Support? You're Not Alone

If anything in today's lesson has affected you, or you want to talk to someone, there is help available.



## **Mental Health & Low Mood**

YoungMinds – <https://www.youngminds.org.uk>  
Kooth – <https://www.kooth.com>  
Mind – <https://www.mind.org.uk>

## **Talk to Someone**

Your Tutor or Head of Year – We're here to help.  
Wellbeing Team and School Nurse  
Report a Concern on Satchel  
Safeguarding Team with the Purple lanyards

## **Healthy Lifestyle**

NHS Every Mind Matters – <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters>  
Change4Life – <https://www.nhs.uk/change4life>

## **Apps That Can Help**

Calm – For mindfulness and sleep.  
Headspace – Meditation and stress relief.  
Clear Fear – Manage anxiety (designed for young people).  
MeeTwo – Anonymously talk to other teens, moderated by experts.

## **Eating Concerns**

Beat Eating Disorders –  
<https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk>  
NHS Live Well – Eating Disorders –  
<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/eating-disorders/>