

Loneliness is a Health Risk
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The Surgeon General recently reported loneliness is similar to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.

I interviewed others to develop the following list of ways to combat loneliness in yourself and others:

1. "Volunteer."
2. "Playing interactive games online with my friends."
3. "I attend church where I am around women who inspire me to love like God does and attend the Women's Bible Study at my church. I love crafts and follow a crafter on facebook."
4. "I send birthday cards to my family/friends and I make food/dessert and take to a widow/widower."
5. "Attend affordable community events."
6. "Plan social functions: pitch-ins, board game night, euchre, etc. and host at my house."
7. "Face timing with my granddaughter who lives in Indy."
8. "Reach out to others."
9. "My puppy dogs and great company!"
10. "I color, clean, organize, get crafty, read; pretty much anything that keeps my mind busy. For me loneliness comes up when I'm bored. I believe loneliness goes hand in hand with depression. If you're depressed, you get lonely and when you're lonely, you get depressed. Loneliness is more of a thought. Keep the mind busy and you'll forget all about being lonely."
11. "Call someone you think could be lonely or has specifically told you they're lonely. Sometimes a call is all that is needed to cheer them up."
12. "My dog is great company; if I am by myself. I love reading also."
13. "If I know someone who is depressed or lonely, I try to get them out to do something; such as a movie, meal, shopping or just visiting."
14. "When I was suffering from depression and loneliness I ramped up my crocheting skills and began making blankets for others. Keeping my hands busy and having to think about what I am doing when I crochet kept my mind occupied; leaving little time to think about anything stressful."
15. "I have a dog; that works wonders. I love to read, sit on the porch and do word search puzzles."
16. "My brother is disabled and has no transportation so he struggles with this. He has a dog. I try to take him wherever he wants to go on Saturdays and at least one night during the week to get him out. We go eat, shop, yard sale, watch movies, attend ball games and get anything he needs."
17. "I listen to music a lot."
18. "My late husband's dog is now my baby and we walk several times a day; and we sit on the porch when I am home."
19. "I attend church and have a lot of support from my church family. I have the same church for years. I hold several offices; song leader, clerk and also clean the church every week."
20. "I mow my yard 2 or 3 times a week just to keep busy. I clean and do laundry and clean the house besides working all week. I try to keep myself busy when I am home."
21. "I have a lot of support from my family. My sister lives next door and we visit and eat out and go shopping together. On Thursday night I eat out with my daughter and her family."
22. "My work family are great about asking if I need something or need help with something at home."
23. "Sometimes keeping busy doesn't help; and I just sit down and cry. That does me sometimes more good than anything. I am very fortunate I have a lot of support from so many people that I don't get lonely too often. But when I do it is an awful feeling. I pray a lot thanking God for always being with me and carrying me though the time of feeling alone; and someone will call, or my sister will come over, or I feel God presence telling me I am not alone that He is always with me and watching over me."

There is a difference in being lonely and wanting to spend time alone. Several mentioned such things as:

"Truthfully, I relish my time at home alone on the weekends."

"I actually enjoy my alone time."

"After being around people all day; I love my time at home."

Please reach out to others if you are experiencing loneliness. Be open with our health care provider if you have experienced significant social changes in your life.