

# Mental Health Awareness #IveBeenThere

**This May it's our Mental Health Awareness month, coinciding with the official Mental Health Awareness week from the 9th to the 15th.**

To kickstart conversations around this year's theme of 'loneliness', we're encouraging our services to hold an informal 'Coffee and Chat' session. Even something as simple as sitting together with a drink and a few snacks can give people the opportunity to say anything on their mind, be a listener, or just benefit from being around others.

We've made this handy guide to help you get started, including everything you need, some conversation prompts, and alternative ways to connect with others and combat loneliness if you think they would fit you or your service better.

Everybody goes through loneliness one time or another in their lives, and we want to help as much as possible to tackle this feeling and let people know #IveBeenThere, and that we don't have to be alone in our loneliness.

COFFEE AND  
CHATS

#MENTALHEALTHMONTH



## HOW TO START YOUR COFFEE AND CHAT SESSION

It's couldn't be any easier to hold your coffee and chat session. You can do it on a morning, a lazy afternoon, or as a wind-down before bed (with decaf, of course!). You can hold your session for you and your colleagues, or for everyone at your service. Once you've set a day and time that works, you can **download and print our poster on the next page and add your chosen dates.**



You can choose a layout that would work best for you- maybe everyone would like to face each other and have a group conversation, or perhaps people would prefer to be separate and have one-to-one chats. The coffee and chat sessions are flexible and can work around you, your team, and the people you support- have a think about what would be a good fit, or has worked previously. **There is no wrong way to open up or start the conversation around mental health and loneliness,** as long as you're feeling as comfortable as possible then you're on the right track.



JOIN US  
FOR A COFFEE  
AND A CHAT



# COFFEE AND CHATS

#MENTALHEALTHMONTH



**Date:**

**Time:**

**Location:**

**Come along and have a chat about anything that's on your mind,  
or just be a listener as part of Mental Health Month this May**

## CONVERSATION STARTERS

- How are you doing?
- What's made you come along today?
- Is there anything you'd like to chat about?
- How have you been finding things today/this week/lately?
- I have noticed you haven't been yourself recently, is everything okay?
- I haven't had a chance to catch up with you in a while, do you want to chat?
- How have you been finding things lately?
- I haven't had a chance to catch up with you in a while, do you want to chat?
- Have you got time for a quick coffee and a catch up?
- Is there anything you're looking forward to?
- Is there anything bothering you that you'd like to talk about?
- What have you been thinking about lately?
- Has anything made you smile today?
- How have you been sleeping?
- Is there anything you need right now?
- I just want you to know that I'm here for you and I care.

## LISTENING

It's important to give people space to talk openly and make sure you are non-judgemental. Even if you don't know what to say, simply saying "I hear you" or "that sounds really tough" lets people know that they're being listened to. You don't have to give answers or solutions, but letting people know that you understand and want to hear them is helpful. You can follow up by asking:

- Have you spoken to anyone else about how you're feeling?
- Is there anything I can do to support you?
- Have you considered any changes that might make this easier?

**You can also guide them towards further support in one of the resources listed on the back page.**

# ACTIVITIES TO COMBAT LONELINESS

It can be difficult to break the cycle of loneliness, whether it's yourself feeling this way or someone you know. However, there are some great activities people can do to help themselves and others to feel less lonely, which will go a long way to improving their mental health.

All of the activities listed below can be altered or adapted to become more accessible. For example, if you or someone you know prefers to engage or communicate in activities non verbally or passively, then you can access groups, activities, or hobbies that don't expect active involvement. Community and social activities don't always require talking or taking part in a direct way, loneliness can be combatted by being a part of something or doing an activity with others.

## Small interactions with strangers



You could do something as simple as going for a local walk and saying hello to the people you pass by or giving them a friendly smile. If you see someone sat on a bench by themselves, you could see if they'd up for a short conversation. Compliments from strangers can brighten our day in a few seconds, and by doing this to others you can have short but meaningful exchanges. Even the smallest of interactions can make us feel better.

## Community involvement



Your local library is typically a hub of fantastic free community activities which anyone can access. Local councils use libraries as a way of sharing information about what's going on in your area and to encourage people to get involved. Go and speak to your friendly local librarian about any groups in the area or if they have any local brochures or what's on guides so you can plan some fun, free, and accessible activities for yourself or others to attend. Some examples of activities or groups can include: litter picking, book clubs, or exercise classes.

If you are looking to make a difference in your community and help people who are isolated then reach out to people in local care homes or community centres and ask if they offer befriending services. Becoming a befriender means regularly checking in with someone and having conversations or even doing nice activities in the area. If you don't have much time to offer, then some befriending services can be as simple as a phone call once a week with someone.

## Easy ways to reach out to friends



If you haven't seen a friend in a while, reach out to them and arrange a catch up in person somewhere you've wanted to try such as a nice coffee shop or a new place for lunch. If it's been a long time since you've spoke with someone, don't be afraid to open up the conversation again. Even a short catch-up over text helps to connect you with people in your life.

## Letters and hobbies



If you like to write letters, there are lots of organisations which you can find on the [link here](#) which matches you up with people across the world to become pen pals with and bring a smile to their faces. Another good way to combat loneliness and not let it settle in is by picking up a hobby or pursuing an interest; it helps you develop a skill and keeps your mind busy. If you're stuck for inspiration on what new activities you can try, click on the [link here](#) to find a long list of things you might not have tried. Doing physical activities or hobbies, such as painting or crocheting, can provide a distraction and also act as a mindful activity for you to sink into.

## Friend apps



There a whole host of apps out there designed to help you meet like-minded people who are open to making new friendships! It can be hard to meet new people as an adult- at school or university we have people all around us, but once that network ends it can be difficult to find new people to bond with. Bumble has a 'BFF' setting, so you can swipe through people near you, read about their hobbies and see if you're a match. Other apps such as Yubo are uniquely for making platonic friends, and has a unique 'catfish-free' video chat feature to see if you gel before meeting up in person, and also keeps you safe. Cosmo has a full list of apps you can check out [here](#).

## Facebook groups



Facebook doesn't just have to be for chatting with people you're already friends with. Groups are a great way to connect with others nearby, and you can search your town/ city and look under 'groups' to see if there's anything you can join. You can also search with either a hobby or interest (i.e religion, LGBTQ+, sport), 'community group', 'friends', or 'girl'. You can also have the option to post on the group anonymously, if posting with your profile at first is too daunting. If you or someone you know is having difficulty getting online, then please check out our 'Guide to Going Digital' on the [link here](#).



## RESOURCES TO HELP COMBAT LONLINESS:

**Campaign to end loneliness:** <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/threat-to-health/>

**Sense** offers support and advice for people with a disability and loneliness-  
0300 330 9256 <https://www.sense.org.uk/>

**Cruse** offers support with bereavement and grief- 0808 808 1677  
<https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

**Samaritans** offers support when you are in a crisis or struggling to cope-  
116 123 // jo@samaritans.org <https://www.samaritans.org/>

**Calm Zone** offers help and support, including a web chat, for men in the UK who are  
struggling and need to talk- 0800 585858 <https://www.thecalmzone.net/>

**The Silver Line** offers a safe space for older people to ask for advice, information, or just to  
talk- 0800 470 80 90 <https://www.thesilverline.org.uk/>

**Age UK** offers support and advice for older people- 0800 169 6565  
<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/health-wellbeing/loneliness/>

**Independent Age** offers befriending services for older people- 0800 319 6789 [https://  
www.independentage.org/get-advice/wellbeing/loneliness](https://www.independentage.org/get-advice/wellbeing/loneliness)

**YoungMinds** offers support for people under the age of 25 who are in crisis- text YM to  
85258. If you are a parent, YoungMinds offer a parent helpline on 0808 802 5544. [https://  
www.youngminds.org.uk/](https://www.youngminds.org.uk/)

**Childline** offers support for children and young people along with counselling sessions-  
0800 1111

**Health Assured** for Creative Support employees has free mental healthsupport for you and  
your household. <https://healthassuredcap.co.uk/>