

Understanding Loneliness and Ways You Can Help

Loneliness and social isolation might seem like conditions that are just “in your head,” but it’s important to recognize the signs and help those who might be effected.

Types of Loneliness

Type	What is it?	How to intervene
Emotional	When someone feels the lack of intimate relationships possibly due to the loss of a close partner or friend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grief and bereavement support can help provide the tools needed to cherish that relationship and move forward to exploring new ones.• Incorporate activities to honor their loved one (e.g., make a scrap book or photo album).
Social	Lack of satisfying contact with family, friends, neighbors and other community members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engaging in social activities can help mitigate this one. Encourage the person to dine with others and find activities that inspire them to interact including music, games and other activities hobbies.• If appropriate for the resident(s), incorporate education in the use of smart phones or computers for communication with family and friends.
Collective	Feeling of not being valued by the broader community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lend a listening ear.• Coordinate a small support group within the community where participants can:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Share their stories with others.- Encourage and uplift one another each other and lift each other up with words of kindness and praise.- Identify opportunities for community involvement.• Facilitate activities that engage the resident and the community in which residents assist the community (e.g., shelling peas for a local farmer).
Existential	The sense that life lacks meaning or purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Often older adults feel they have moved from providing for their family to being becoming a burden on them. Help them find a new meaning and purpose such as the following:• Explore small chores in the facility such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Helping with a pet therapy animal- Watering or tending plants/gardens- Feeding the birds- Delivering mail or papers• Shower them with lots of appreciation for their contributions – no matter how big or small.

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