

Factsheet 10: Let's Talk: Getting Connected



We All Need Social Connections

Having a solid crew or even just a few good people in a young person's corner is huge for their mental wellbeing. In fact, supportive relationships can lower anxiety and depression, boost self-esteem, and literally improve physical health.

Positive social connections help us handle stress and cope when life gets messy. As we grow, our circles naturally shift. Moving from school to uni or work, changing relationships, moving to a new area, or just dealing with life's curveballs can change who we hang out with. During these times, we have to find new ways to connect and protect our sense of belonging.

Did you know?

Around 1 in 3 people report feeling lonely at some point in their lives.

Social Isolation

Social Isolation is the physical side of things.

It's when you have very little contact with others or have very few social interactions.

Loneliness

Loneliness is the emotional side. It's that personal feeling of being alone or disconnected even when you're surrounded by people. It can bring up feelings of sadness or emptiness.

The information in this factsheet is designed to help you better understand mental health and what you can do to better support a young person who might be going through a tough time.

It is to provide you with support and in turn confidence to offer initial assistance and guide a young person toward professional help.

Both can weigh heavily on our mood and, over time, impact our mental and physical health. Feeling lonely is a natural part of life, but no one should have to sit in it alone. Sometimes we just need some new strategies or extra support to help us manage those emotions and rebuild our connections.

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6 Ways to Manage Feeling of Loneliness

Protecting your headspace is all about noticing the good vibes already around you and making a few small shifts. Here's how to look after yourself:

Lock in Your Health Routine

Stick to the basics. Eating decent food, moving your body, getting actual sleep, and making time for things you actually like doing keeps your mental health baseline strong.

Spot Your Triggers

Figure out exactly when you feel the most lonely or bored. If it always hits on Sunday nights, plan ahead. Schedule a movie night, work on a hobby, or FaceTime a friend during that specific time so you aren't just sitting with your thoughts

Do a Digital Audit

Clean up your feed. Unfollow or mute accounts that make you feel bad about yourself or give you major FOMO. Follow people who make you laugh or feel inspired, and put the phone down if scrolling is ruining your mood.

Count the Small Moments

Notice the tiny interactions in your day. Having a quick laugh with a classmate you don't usually talk to, saying thanks to the bus driver, or smiling at someone walking past actually gives your brain a quick happiness boost.

Lean on Pets

Animals are the absolute best for comfort and don't come with any drama. Plus, they also help keep you on track with healthy habits, like getting outside.

Put Energy Into Existing Links

Put effort into the friends and family members who already show up for you. Send a quick text to check in, share a meme, or make plans to hang out. Keeping those existing bonds strong makes a massive difference.

Real Talk: If loneliness is starting to completely overwhelm your day-to-day life, reach out for professional support. There are helplines designed just to chat, and professionals who can help you build social skills or shift negative thought patterns.



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Strategies for Building New Connections

Whether a young person is starting fresh at a new school, moving to a new town, or just wants to expand their squad, making friends takes time, effort, and a healthy amount of give-and-take. Here is a roadmap to building friendships:

STEP 1: Prep Your Mindset

Before you put yourself out there, do a quick vibe check with yourself.

- Clear the slate: Building friendships takes energy. Try to let go of past friendship drama, accept where you're at right now, and keep an open mind.
- Know what you're looking for: What kind of friend do you actually need right now? A good listener? Someone to help you vent? A creative buddy to co-create with, or just someone funny to send TikToks to? Knowing this saves you from a lot of wasted energy later.

STEP 2: Find Your People

Instead of hunting for a specific "perfect best friend," focus on the things you actually love to do. Your interests are your cheat code.

- Be yourself first: Figure out what you like to do, watch, play, or talk about. You'll feel the most comfortable and confident when you're just doing your thing.
- Join the club: Look for groups or school clubs that share your hobbies—like sports teams, gaming communities, art clubs, or theater. Being part of a crew gives you a regular place to hang out and a built-in conversation starter.
- Look outside the school bubble: This is a major life hack. Check out local youth groups, volunteering gigs, or sports leagues outside of school. It gets you out of the daily school drama and introduces you to people you'd never meet otherwise.

STEP 3: Put Yourself Out There

Making friends is a skill. Just like gaming, sports, or learning an instrument, you get better at it the more you practice.

- Make the move: Go to new activities, introduce yourself, swap socials, and actually follow up to hang out. Be ready to listen, but don't be afraid to share stuff about yourself, too.
- Don't put all your eggs in one basket: It's better to talk to a few different people instead of putting all your hopes on one person. While having a "ride or die" is the goal, it's smarter to talk to different groups when you're just starting out.

STEP 4: Keep the Momentum Going

Think about how easy it was to make friends when you were a little kid. It wasn't magic—it was just because you saw each other every day. Channel that energy to lock in your new connections:

- Keep it consistent: Try to link up regularly. Group chats are great, but make plans to study together, grab food after school, or play games online over Discord. Put it in the calendar and don't flake!
- Just say yes: If someone invites you somewhere, actually show up. Saying yes to a random hangout or a birthday party can introduce you to new music, new hobbies, and even more potential friends.