

You are not alone

Have you found yourself more withdrawn lately?

- Do you keep yourself constantly busy?
- Are you self-absorbed, caught up in your own problems?
- Do you find it hard to show interest in the needs of others?
- Do you feel desperate for companionship?
- Are you overly critical of yourself?

If you answered yes to more than three of these questions, you may be experiencing symptoms of loneliness.

Loneliness is a painful feeling of depression and anxiety. A person who is lonely may find it hard to cope with everyday activities. He or she may not want to socialize or may lack motivation to do familiar things. Changes in sleeping and eating habits are also symptoms of loneliness.

Other common responses to loneliness are withdrawal from family, friends or society as a whole; depression; physical illness; anger and dependency.

Many causes

The causes of loneliness are numerous. People may feel lonely after moving to a new home, because of a new job, after retirement, after a separation or divorce or following the death of a loved one.

Some people may feel lonely because of their personality. Their situation may be linked to shyness, low self-esteem, and a lack of communication skills or a painful past that will not allow them to trust others.

Being lonely can produce different responses. Loneliness can keep people from forming closer bonds with others, which may lead them to feel even lonelier. However, loneliness can also motivate people to consider their actions, try new approaches to life and improve their own lives.

Take action

The more people sit around feeling sorry for themselves, the lonelier they are apt to become. A lonely person can take measures to overcome this problem. The first thing is admitting to being lonely, then takes steps to correct the problem.

It is very important that good health is not neglected,

especially during lonely times. It is necessary to maintain good physical condition by exercising, eating the right foods and getting enough rest.

Change your attitude

It's not good to dwell on the negative aspects of loneliness. Recognizing talents and strengths will raise a lonely person's self-esteem. Finding positive alternatives to the causes of the loneliness is also helpful.

Get involved

A lonely person who becomes isolated from others and remains inactive is only making matters worse. Getting involved in church activities, senior centers, bowling teams and volunteering are all very good ways to offer friendship to others and at the same time forget about being lonely.

Keeping contact with friends and family members is essential. These people can serve as a very important support system in times of loneliness. Remember that it is the quality of friends that counts – not the quantity. A few close friends can sometimes bring more happiness and joy than hundreds of acquaintances.

Remember, you can't expect others to solve your problem for you. You must take action yourself.

If you need help

If you are ever overwhelmed by loneliness or simply need someone to talk to, talk to a friend, relative or clergy. Or talk to a counselor, whose objective viewpoint can put things in perspective. To make an appointment, call (810) 257-3740. In an emergency, call Crisis Services, at (810) 257-3740 or toll free (877) 346-3648, where a counselor is available 24 hours a day. TTY users call (810) 232-6310. © www.genhs.org