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FACT SHEET 3:

Loneliness & the elderly - a UnitingCare perspective

What is loneliness? How would you define it?

For older people, it is part of a general feeling that they are no longer useful, or not part of a group which matters to society, are unable to contribute, even to a social group.

Many friends have died, others are not easy to contact because of loss of licence, difficulties with public transport and other circumstances.

Marriage partners may have died. Even if there is family still in touch (and many have children who live interstate) there is no-one for whom they are the most important person, as will have been the case when their partner was still alive.

What are the feelings experienced by people who are lonely?

There is a general sense of loss.

More specifically, this can include loss of confidence, loss of sense of worth or loss of a 'role'.

If a person who feels alone were to ask you how to change their situation, what would you advise them to do?

Get involved in something like a choir, an art group, a walking group, where the task seems to be the object of meeting, but the social aspect comes from that.

Offer your services as a volunteer somewhere where older people are celebrated rather than seen as a nuisance.

Think of the thing that you do best, then think of somewhere that needs that skill and join the two things.

If a person knows someone who is experiencing loneliness, how could they go about helping this person?

Ask for their help with something. Find out their skills and think of a way to use them.

What other resources are available (online or other) which would be helpful for people who are feeling alone?

There are funded services such as Do Care, with UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide.

Do Care has volunteer visitors, phone support, Telelink groups and groups to link young people with older people.

Contact UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide for further information:

Ph (08) 8375 1403

www.ucwesleyadelaide.org.au

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This fact sheet is designed as a resource tool.

The Uniting Church SA recommends that those struggling with loneliness or isolation seek professional help.

A helpful starting point is to contact Lifeline on 13 11 14.



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