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## **FACT SHEET 5:**

### **Loneliness - a psychologist's perspective**

#### **What is loneliness? How would you define it?**

Loneliness is a normal emotion/feeling that almost everyone experiences at some time in their life. In a chronic form, it can be related to a mental illness such as depression or social anxiety, or it can be an acute feeling which a person may experience for only a short time if they move to a new area, have little support or social contact, or at certain times of the year, such as Christmas, if they have few friends or family.

Loneliness should be differentiated from being alone, as some people enjoy being alone and having solitude and do not feel lonely, whilst others may be surrounded by many family and friends but feel very lonely.

#### **What are the feelings experienced by people who are lonely?**

It is a very personal experience in terms of the duration of time that the person experiences loneliness, however most people who are lonely often feel emptiness, sadness, isolation.

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

Seek support and social contact. This could be via email, or telephone initially, if they don't feel up to going out, but the best antidote is getting active and busy, going out and meeting and socialising with others.

Engaging in a range of activities - physical, social, pleasant, achievement - will also possibly help with lack of motivation and sadness that often accompanies loneliness.

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

Ask them what would help! If they are not sure, make suggestions such as going out for coffee, meeting at a park, visit each other at home, etc. Provide support and encouragement, and don't give up if they say no initially.

Information supplied by:

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\*Name changed for privacy reasons

**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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