

Helping people who are lonely

There are many ways we can help people, but sometimes the best way is just listening and saying something kind. It is just as important to know what you can do to help yourself too.

How to use:

Use these five activities to focus on how to help others who are lonely. Educators can use one or all the activities. They can be used altogether or separately. We encourage educators to adapt the activities to suit them.

Some learners may need extra support with loneliness. Signposting people to professional support is a way you can help them. Encourage people to [contact the coronavirus support line](#) or other support lines if they need to speak to someone urgently.



Recommended ages: 7-18



Learning objectives

Learners will:

- think about the ways other people help us cope with loneliness
- learn about ways we can help other people to cope with loneliness
- learn about what we can do to cope with loneliness ourselves



Activities

- what helps me when I'm lonely?
- characters' stories: how to help
- active listening
- sharing advice and support
- your song, your story

What helps me when I'm lonely?



Suggested timing: 10 minutes

Ask learners to think about ways that other people help them when they feel lonely.



Encourage learners to focus on kind acts and words. They could draw a line down the centre of a page and write down as many examples of kind acts and words they can think of either side.

To help frame the question ask learners to think about what kind actions people have done to help them when they have felt lonely or worried, and what kind words have said to comfort them. If they have completed the 'web of connections' activity they can use that to help them reflect on how others help them.

Active listening



Suggested timing: 25 minutes

Listening to others can be an effective way to help people, and really important in having meaningful conversations.



In pairs talk about loneliness. Learners can talk about their own views and experiences if they are comfortable to do so. Otherwise, they could use the stories from the 'stories of loneliness' activity to hot seat and act out one of the characters. How would they tell that character's story?

Encourage learners to listen to the tone as well as look at the other person's body too and see if it helps them understand how they are feeling.

Older learners can use the 'HEAR' framework to support their active listening:

- **halt:** stop what you are doing and give your full attention to the speaker
- **engage:** nod and make eye contact to show them you are listening
- **analyse:** think about what they have said to check you understand it
- **respond:** repeat back their main points to show you were listening and check you understood. Share your thoughts and make it their turn to actively listen to you.

At the end, discuss what they learned from listening. Ask the pairs to talk about:

- how did it feel to know someone was listening to you?
- did listening help you to understand the story better?
- how does listening to others help them with loneliness?
- how might you use what you have learned in the future?

For more activities on the skill of active listening look at [the living well with kindness resource](#).

Sharing advice and support



Suggested timing: long term project

Suggested ages: 12-18

A British Red Cross young volunteer, Loren, asked other young people to share their questions about loneliness and wrote a blog giving her insight and advice, with help from research and the Red Cross psychosocial team.

Encourage learners to read the blog for more tips on how they can help themselves and others. Can they think of more ideas of how to help if you are lonely?



You could set up your own 'agony aunt' style question box in class. Set up a box or email address where learners can ask anonymous questions or share problems they have about loneliness. Find some volunteers to be 'loneliness champions', or get the group, to pick out some of the questions and think of a way to help with each one.

You could set aside some time each week for champions to share how they think people can help with that question or problem and discuss as a class, or you could post the answer somewhere on a bulletin board or school blog and encourage people to read. Educators can help to ensure learners are signposted to more information and support if needed.

Does
this help

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learners to start an honest conversation about loneliness? Remember that talking openly is another way of helping people feel confident and know they are not alone.

Your song, your story



Suggested timing: 20 minutes

Suggested ages: 12-18



A British Red Cross young volunteer, Esther, asked other young people around the world to share a song that helps them feel better when they are lonely, and a story about why they chose this song.

Encourage learners to read and [listen to a selection of songs](#) altogether. Think about:

- why they think the person chose this song?
- can you relate to the reasons they put?
- how does the song make you feel? Think about the words and the sound.
- which song would you choose and why?

Ask learners to create their own collaborative playlist with their happy songs and stories, or send the songs and stories to us at rededucation@redcross.org.uk and we could add them to the playlist and the website.

Discuss as a group why they think Esther chose to create a playlist? Do they use music to help them feel less lonely? Why? How might it help others?