

Mission Possible: Independent But Not Alone

MOVING BEYOND LONELINESS

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



“There was never a night or a problem that could defeat sunrise or hope.”

– Bern Williams

Group Purpose: The purpose of this group is to explore ways we can move beyond loneliness.

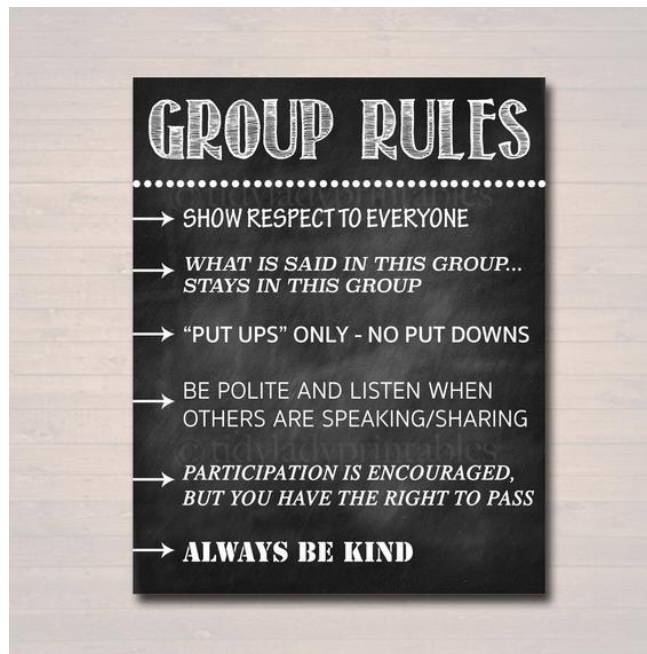
Session 1: Introduction to course

Welcome and Introductions

Throughout our time together, we will explore what it means to be lonely and how we can remain connected and feel a sense of satisfaction in life. Some people desire to live independently, but once we achieve this milestone, other challenges can occur. Feeling lonely is something we may experience. Through this group we will be sensitive to our feelings but focus on the purpose of this group – to move beyond and cope with loneliness. We will focus on the skills of how to best do this.

In groups, there is always a combination of processing thoughts and feelings. We will do our best to do this. The very nature of groups is processing – we participate and learn and grow as a result. When we focus on the future, we are focusing on the outcome. What we will gain as we practice these skills is an inner journey to life satisfaction.

Group Norms



Before we continue, we will create “group norms”. This is another way to say “group rules”. As you may know, every group begins this way.

- Can anyone share why groups create rules?

Groups create rules in order to accomplish the purpose of the group. In order for us to accomplish the goal of this group, we need to work effectively together. We do this by creating a safe space for us to share without risk of judgement or shame.

Exercise

Before we move onto the topic of our class, we will participate in a group exercise. These are important for many reasons. First, they help us to get to know each other a little better and become more comfortable with everyone. It also creates an atmosphere for learning and participation.

What's My Name?

On name tags or similar labels, write down the name of a famous person, or write down people types (e.g. doctor, athlete, nerd, disabled, wealthy, homeless, etc.). Place these nametags on a team member's back so that they cannot see what they are, but the rest of the group can.

For a set amount of time, the entire group should mingle, and ask and answer questions. They should treat each other according to the stereotypical way based on what kind of person they have been labeled. Each team member can use that treatment, as well as the answers to questions, to figure out what the label is. As each team member figures out who they are, they can exit the game and let the rest continue.

Purpose: By confronting stereotypes in both how people treat us and in the questions and answers used, the team can get a better sense of how we mistakenly see people as well as how it feels to be so narrowly defined. This is a good ice-breaker activity regardless of whether the group members know each other well or not.

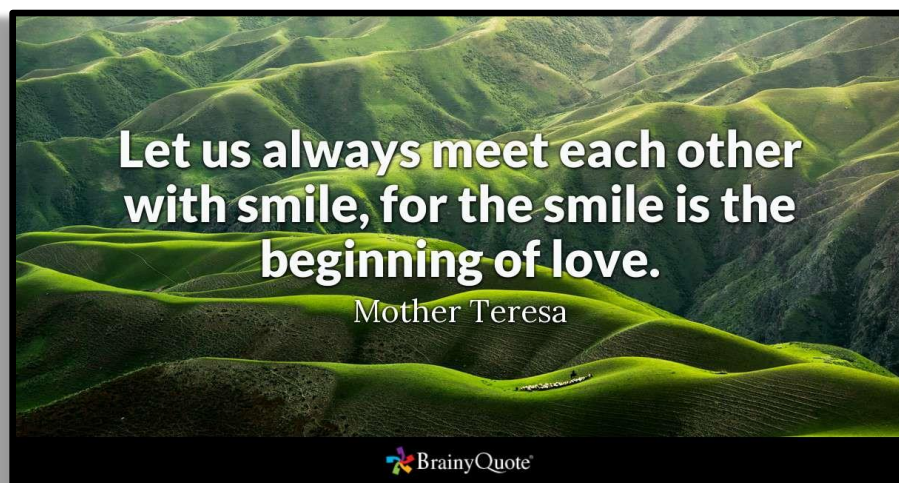
introduction

As we move towards greater independence, we find ourselves having to think about ways to remain engaged with people and ways to entertain ourselves when other people are not around. As human beings, we are all social animals and need connectedness. Some people need more connectedness than others and that is okay! We are all unique. In this group we will explore the themes of loneliness, more than surviving it... we aim to thrive!

Loneliness can be painful. Even if we are diagnosed with "depression" or any other diagnosis, the important thing to know is that we can actively engage in skills and behaviors to feel better.

This group will include a lot of information that will help us to feel better. We are focusing specifically on loneliness for individuals who have recently moved out of adult homes or some other type of congregate care setting and into their own place. HOWEVER, loneliness can affect us all regardless of our life situation. If you are not a person who has recently become independent, but you feel that loneliness is something you are experiencing, then this group is for you too!

If you are lonely, it means that you desire a certain level of social interaction that is not currently present in your life. Your level of desire for connectedness may be more or less than others in this group. As we are all different, we should look around and appreciate everyone for the person they are. Also, recognize that the first people you can connect to right now, to increase your social interaction and thus decrease your loneliness.



Session 2: Why am I lonely?

If you have experienced loneliness, you probably already know that you can be surrounded by a group of people and still feel alone. Therefore, connection to others is part of the solution to feeling better. We must also work on ourselves, our self-esteem, and to become comfortable being alone and enjoying our alone time.

Some people don't like alone time – for many reasons, their brain may wander into the past and worry if they made the right decision, or regret over something that happened, etc.

Has this happened to you?

Sometimes their brains run fast forward into the future, hoping it will be better but worrying just the same.

Has this happened to you?

This happens to all of us. We will practice how to be present in the moment and actually, with practice, be able to focus our brain to the current. This is called Mindfulness and we will introduce that to you as one of the skills to help you with loneliness.

Why do you feel loneliness? As you know the reasons are different for different people. Basically, it's wanting more social connections than you currently have. Some people call this, lack of social supports.

Life changes can cause increased loneliness. Moving is definitely an example of a life change. So are other situations, like starting a new job, or even getting older, hitting a milestone, having a child, not having a child when you want one, losing a loved one, illness, etc.

What are some other possible reasons for people feeling lonely?

This curriculum will use the work of Ester Leutenberg and John Liptak to help us cope with loneliness.

Other reasons people experience loneliness:

1. Life Changes
2. Getting Older
3. Inadequate Social Skills
4. Personality Characteristics
5. Situational

1. Life Changes – reasons were explored earlier (on the previous page)
2. Getting Older – as we get older we experience the death of people we know.
3. Inadequate Social Skills – if we haven't learned the necessary skills to communicate with others, to make and keep friends.
4. Personality Characteristics – lack of self-esteem and shyness
5. Situational – you can be lonely if you are around people that you do not share interests, values, ideas, etc.

Session 3: The Symptoms and Effects of Loneliness

There are two types of loneliness categories:

1. SITUATIONAL LONELINESS – people feel lonely due to a situation or experience. This is a temporary situation and can change when your circumstances change.
2. CHRONIC LONELINESS – this loneliness persists regardless of your situation or circumstances. This kind of loneliness happens when someone doesn't have a support system and/or feel insecure and fears being alone. Sometimes, you may feel chronic loneliness even if you have a support system. This may even be the result of some mental health challenges.

According to Leutenber and Liptak, these are some symptoms and effects of loneliness:

1. Crying a lot of the time
2. Feeling "hollow" inside
3. Feeling alienated from other people
4. Feeling as if you are alone if when surrounded by others
5. Feeling as if you are not accepted
6. Feeling as if you are not as worthwhile
7. Feeling as if you are not loved
8. Feeling as if you cannot make friends or build stronger relationships with acquaintances
9. Feeling as if you do not have the same interests and values as those around you
10. Feeling as if you have nobody with whom to share personal concerns and experiences
11. Feeling cutoff or disconnected
12. Feeling damaged and unloved
13. Feeling empty
14. Feeling lost with no direction
15. Feeling physical pain akin to a "broken heart"
16. Feeling sad

Which of these symptoms have you felt in the past?

What helped you to no longer feel that way?

Which of these symptoms do you feel now?

What have you tried to alleviate your current symptoms?

Are you alone in sharing one or more of these symptoms?

Session 4: I have the strength to overcome

Simply by signing up for this class, you share with us that you feel the pain of loneliness. We don't want to focus only on the what and why of our pain but to also understand ourselves. To do this we will review our strengths.

Why do we need to focus on our strengths?

see the next page for the questionnaire

EXPLORE YOUR STRENGTHS

Approach this from a place of strength, knowing that you have the confidence, the openness, and humility, and the care for yourself to accept and address problems you are having.

What strength exists in you that prompted you to join this group?

When you faced very difficult times, how did you get through them?

What are the best qualities of your personality?

Why are you giving yourself the opportunity to do this group?

SEE SECOND PAGE

LIST ALL OTHER STRENGTHS YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED AT LEAST ONCE IN YOUR LIFE:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

What does loneliness mean to you?

What would your life look like if you were not lonely?



Session 5: Level of loneliness

In today's class, you will answer questions to determine your level of loneliness. This assessment contains 22 statements that describe feelings associated with loneliness. Read each of the statements and decide whether or not the statement describes you. If the statement DOES describe you, circle the number under the TRUE column next to that item. If the statement DOES NOT describe you, circle the number under the FALSE column next to that item. This is not a test. Since there are no right or wrong answers, do not spend too much time thinking about your answers. Be sure to respond to every statement.

	TRUE	FALSE
I feel as if nobody likes me.....	1	2
I like to meet new people.....	2	1
I don't mind doing things alone.....	2	1
I have many people to talk with.....	2	1
I feel excluded from groups.....	1	2
I enjoy attending public events.....	2	1
I often feel sorry for myself.....	1	2
I never have feelings of desolation.....	2	1
I feel alone a lot of the time.....	1	2
I have many friends.....	2	1
I have trouble communicating with those around me.....	1	2
I will contact others without waiting for them to contact me.....	2	1
I feel secure in my life.....	2	1
I am often very anxious.....	1	2
I feel empty inside.....	1	2
I am starved for company.....	1	2
I don't have anyone to depend on.....	1	2
I have no problem sticking up conversations with strangers.....	2	1
I make friends easily.....	2	1
I fear being rejected by others.....	1	2
I like most people I meet.....	2	1
I have nobody with whom I can share personal concerns and experiences.....	1	2

ADD UP TOTAL SCORE:

Total the numbers that you circled and you will get a total in the range from 22 to 44. Write in the total number you scored again - on top of the next page:

LEVEL OF LONELINESS TOTAL = _____

PROFILE INTERPRETATION

INDIVIDUAL SCALE SCORE	RESULT	INDICATIONS
22 to 29	LOW	Low scores indicate that you are experiencing a high level of loneliness. Complete the following exercises to develop skills for coping with the loneliness you feel.
30 TO 36	MODERATE	Moderate scores indicate that you are experiencing some loneliness. Complete the following exercises to develop skills for coping with any loneliness you feel.
37 TO 44	HIGH	High scores indicate that you are experiencing a low level of loneliness. Complete the following exercises to develop skills for coping with any loneliness you feel.

REGARDLESS OF HOW YOU SCORED, YOU WILL BENEFIT FROM COMPLETING THE ACTIVITIES THAT FOLLOW.



How did it feel to mingle?

Share some ideas you learned during our Mingle session!

Which ideas resonated more with you?

Which ideas have you tried before?

Which ideas will you try now?

Session 6: Skills for coping with loneliness – assessments

Like yourself more

Many people stay lonely because they do not like themselves enough so they believe they need the companionship of others. In order to feel less lonely, you need to like yourself more. Once you like yourself more, you will not feel as sad and you will enjoy the solitude.

In the spaces that follow, describe what you like about yourself and what you do not like about yourself.

THINGS I LIKE ABOUT MYSELF	HOW DO OTHERS SEE ME?	HOW CAN I ENHANCE THIS?

THINGS I DON'T LIKE ABOUT MYSELF	HOW DO OTHERS SEE ME?	HOW CAN I DECREASE THIS OR STOP DOING THIS?

Expressing My Feelings

Bottling up your emotions is not healthy. In order to overcome loneliness, you need to express your emotions.

In the spaces below, identify ways that you can express your emotions in a healthy manner.

HEALTHY WAYS I CAN EXPRESS EMOTIONS	HOW I COULD BEGIN TODAY	HOW I COULD FURTHER ENGAGE IN THE ACTIVITY
CREATIVE ACTIVITIES		
WRITING/JOURNALING		
PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES		
SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES		
EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES		
OTHER		

In what ways do you think these activities will help you?

Escaping Loneliness

Many people who are lonely escape their feelings by engaging in unhealthy activities. What types of unhealthy activities do you engage in to avoid being lonely.

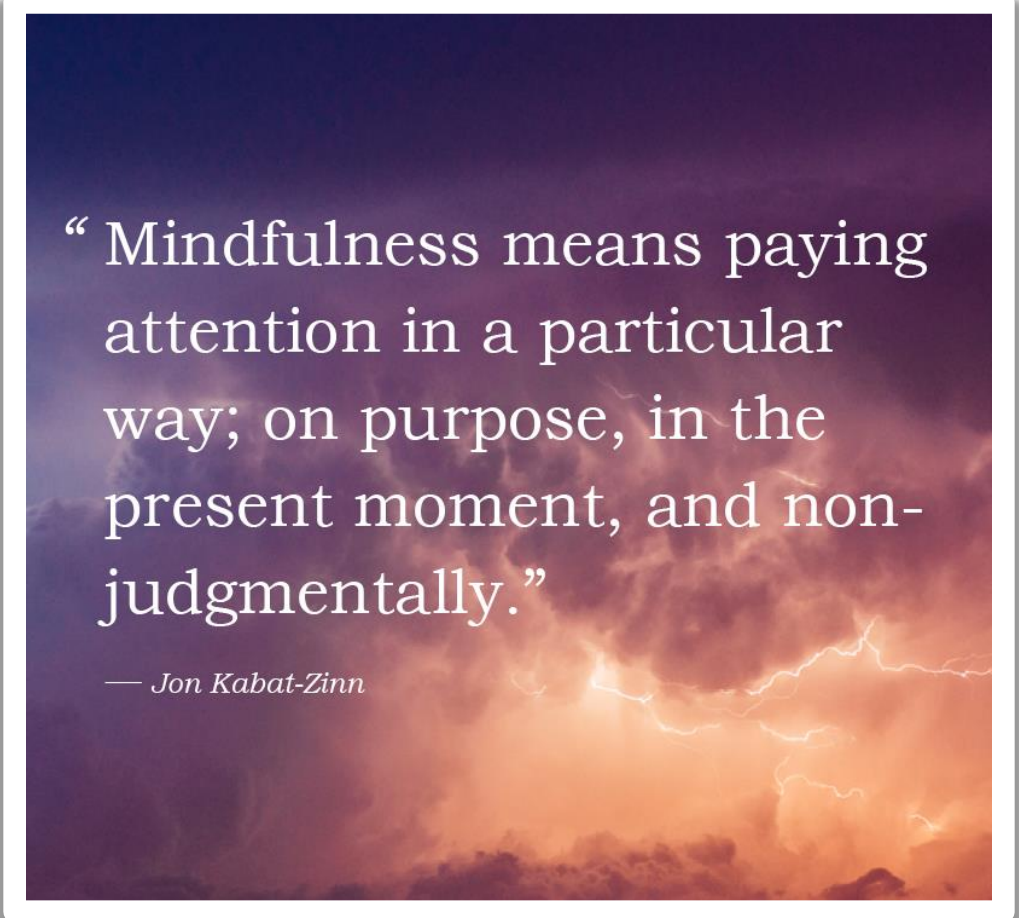
List the types of unhealthy activities you engage in, how you think they help you, and healthy activities you could engage in instead.

UNHEALTHY ACTIVITIES	HOW DO YOU THINK THEY HELP YOU?	WHAT COULD YOU BE DOING INSTEAD?

Which activity do you spend the most time doing, and in what ways could you begin to substitute healthier activities when you feel lonely?

Session 7: Mindfulness – how to beat your busy brain

The following was taken from a NYAPRS training on Mindfulness.

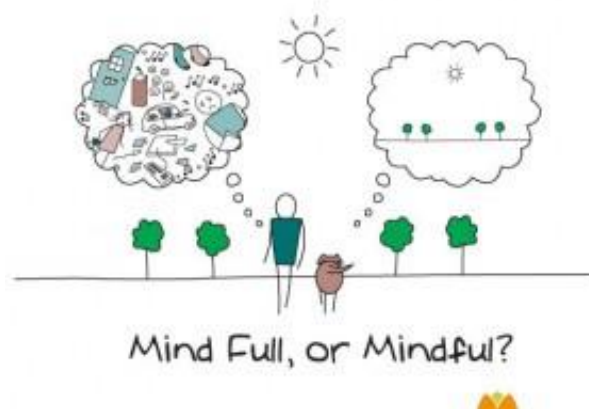


“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”

— *Jon Kabat-Zinn*

To distill this definition down further, Mindfulness, at its essence, is simply being present. This means paying attention to what is happening right now. Without judgment. Without overthinking. Without invalidating your experience. Mindfulness is just being willing to show up to the present moment and to accept the present.

It sounds simple, but in all honesty, most of us spend only a fraction of our day Mindfully engaged in our lives. We usually tune out our actual experience, and get distracted by thoughts about our experience.



I bet we are all familiar with what it feels like to be in that 'busy mind bubble!' It's not just you it's the majority of us! We spend most of our lives there. But we do have moments like on the right...taking in the world around us...not having the 'mind full' but being mindful of the world around us - the beauty of the environment, nature, a loved one, something we perceive as special.

It's the refocusing whenever your mind wanders to the past or the future. -----
We don't naturally spend too much time in the present. We ruminate about our past errors; we think about our futures ---- research shows us that people spend a lot of their time being hopeful about the future instead of making this ONE MOMENT the best it can be.

WHAT CAN MINDFULNESS DO FOR ME?

Reduce rumination

Stress reduction

Less emotional reactivity

Relationship satisfaction

Can improve physical and mental wellbeing



When do you/have you felt the most present?

- How might you describe this experience?
- When do you tend to feel most disconnected/dissociated?

Controlling Emotions vs. Experiencing Emotions

One of the most important points about Mindfulness, is that it is very difficult. Our brains are hardwired to make judgments, time travel, and create stories. In a way, working to be Mindful is working against the biology of our brains. No one is perfect at this. Luckily, there is no need to be perfect at it. We can experience the real benefit of Mindfulness when we notice we are not being mindful, and choose to turn our minds back to the now.

The power of mindfulness: recognizing when we are not Mindful. If we get distracted a thousand times, we have a thousand opportunities to notice and shift our attention. The more we practice, the easier it becomes to recognize when the mind has 'left the building'. And with each time we practice, we gain a little more clarity and control.

Journaling



*"It's like whispering to oneself
and listening at the same time."*

- Mina Murray

Directing your thoughts inward can be difficult in this chaotic world. Your thoughts are probably overflowing throughout the day, preventing you from being able to actually focus on your mind.

Journaling helps you to focus your mind on the now –the present. Journaling helps you practice noticing.

So, it's taking what research has shown us, that we are able to cultivate awareness through practice. Journaling is practical – you are physically doing something while you are focusing your mind on your day. Some people find it easier to be Mindful with something to focus on – that can be a mantra, chocolate, rubber ball, etc. It makes the experience more real as you focus on the texture, taste, sound, smell, etc. as part of your Mindfulness.

Mindfulness Exercise: Let's Practice!



In the following meditation is by Brad Austen this meditation transports you to a beautiful beach setting. You will feel the warm sand underneath your feet, the sunshine energizing your skin, and hear the seagulls and the waves crashing on the sand. It is a short-guided meditation to allow yourself to be at one with nature.

A Message in a Bottle – Meditation Script

Begin now by visualizing yourself on a beautiful pristine beach. It is a pleasant sunny day, yet not too hot with a light breeze.

You feel the warm sun warming and energizing your skin. You hear the waves gently lapping on the sand. You allow yourself to be at one with nature.

You are completely alone on the beach and feel completely safe. You reach down and take your shoes and socks off and place them on a towel on the sand. The grains of sand feel warm and energizing on your feet as you walk

along the sand. You hear the faint sound of seagulls in the air, which adds to the tranquility.

You begin walking towards the water and walk along the shore, where the water meets the sand. The sand feels soft and cool from the water, as you walk along it. The air is fresh and clean.

You allow any tension in your body to melt away as you walk along the sand. All cares and worries of your day are gradually melting away.

You take a slow deep breath in and exhale gently. Again, taking another deep breathe in and exhale gently. You feel the elements and life force from nature restoring your energy levels and sense of calm.

Visualize in your mind any place you may be holding tension in your body, any aches or pains, gradually softening and releasing.

As the water ebbs and flows on the shore, so do all your worries and tiredness ebb and flow away. You are feeling completely serene and at peace at the beach.

As a wave comes to shore, you look down and see a bottle by your feet. You reach down and pick up the bottle. As you hold the bottle in your hand, you notice the bottle has been sealed with a cork and there is a note inside the bottle. You loosen the cork and reach in with your fingers to pull out the piece of paper. You unfold the paper and read the words.

"If you are reading these words, know that you are receiving this message at the right time and place. Know that you are special and loved eternally. I have chosen you to be here at this time and place to help the people and planet heal. Never doubt or forget how special you are. – My Eternal Love, The Great Spirit."

Overjoyed with emotion, you feel someone else should discover this bottle. You fold the note and place it back into the bottle. You reseal the bottle with the cork and with your best throw; you throw the bottle back into the water.

It is now time to leave this meditation. When you feel ready, gently bring your awareness back to your body and the room. You can give your fingers and toes a wiggle and when you feel ready, gently open your eyes, coming back to waking consciousness.

Session 8: Technology: the benefits and warnings

Connecting with others, even if it is online, can help to reduce feelings of loneliness. Respond to the sentence starters below:

1. The Advantages of communicating with people on email are:

2. The disadvantages of communicating with people on email are:

3. The advantages of communicating with people on a blog are:

4. The advantages of communicating with people on social media are:

5. The advantages of communicating with people by text are:

6. The advantages of communicating with people in chat rooms are:

7. The disadvantages of communicating with people in chat rooms are:

8. The advantages of communicating with people on a cell/landline phone are: _____

9. The disadvantages of communicating with people on cell/landline phone are: _____

10. The advantages of communicating with people on video calls are:

11. The disadvantages of communicating with people on video calls are:

12. The fun thing about communicating with people online are:

13. The dangers of communicating with people online are:

14. The advantages of speaking with someone face-to-face are:

15. The disadvantages of speaking to someone face-to-face are:

After responding to the sentence starters above, what have you decided are the three of the best ways for you to communicate?

1.

2.

3.

How Much Tech is too Much Tech?

Some people use social media, cell phones, etc. during their alone time. This can serve to be distracting but if too much time is spent, it can also limit the time you spend doing other things more useful or creative and/or limit your time interacting with other people in person.

Think about how much time you devote to social media relationships and what you receive from them to answering the questions below:

Approximately how much time per day do you spend interacting with people on social media sites, or the computer, etc., time in general?

Chat rooms.....	_____	Texting.....	_____
Online dating sites.....	_____	Searching.....	_____
Online groups.....	_____	Other.....	_____
Emailing.....	_____	Other.....	_____
Video chatting.....	_____	Other.....	_____
Games.....	_____	Other.....	_____

How does this form of connection help you with your alone time?

How does it keep you from spending time with other activities or people?

How can you make a pledge to yourself to cut down on some of time spent on the above list and use that time in other beneficial ways?

Are you always honest about who you are when you are online? _____

Do you believe other people are always honest with you online? _____

If there is dishonesty, what does this say about an online relationship?

Session 9: Developing Friendships

There are actually many things you can do to develop healthy relationships and ensure that you are not experiencing feelings of loneliness.

Following are some tips, and questions you can answer to help you develop friendships with others.

Take better care of your personal appearance and hygiene. How can you do this?

Show people that you are interested in what they are saying. How can you do this?

Ask people questions that show you are interested in them. How can you do this?

Get involved in community activities. How can you do this?

Volunteer to help others. How can you do this?

Call or visit friends and family. How can you do this?

Adopt a pet for companionship. How can you do this?

Go places to be around other people. How can you do this?

Believe that others will like you. How can you do this?

Don't be disappointed if you don't connect. How can you do this?

*It's Not Too Late
To Develop New
Friendships Or
Reconnect with
People.*

Friendly Invitations

It may be time to reach out to other people rather than sitting back and waiting for others to reach out to you.

The table below will help you explore ways to reach out to others.

How I Can Reach Out	To Whom I Can Reach Out	What I Can Gain
Take a walk		
Go to a movie		
Have a meal together		
Do an activity together		
Play cards / games		
Other		
Other		
Other		

Friendly Conversations

Many people who find themselves experiencing loneliness have difficulty communicating effectively with others in social situations. You can learn to take responsibility for your messages and your conversations with others.

When you find yourself in a social situation, take responsibility for what you say:

Use words like, I, me and my, to communicate your message. In this way you “own” the messages you send to them. Take responsibility for your own words. When you use words like “they said” or “some people”, you put the responsibility of what you are saying onto someone else. Using “you” often sounds threatening, aggressive and blaming, whereas creating I-messages conveys your comments in a positive way.

Maintain eye contact and speak directly to the person. Try not to stare, look away too often, cross your arms in front of you, or allow yourself to be distracted by other sounds and sights in the environment.

Now you try! In the spaces that follow, note the questions someone might ask you, and record how you can respond.

What New People Might Ask Me	Thoughts, Ideas and Feelings I Want to Convey
Tell me a little about yourself.	
How did you decide to live here?	
How did choose your current career path?	
What do you do with your free time?	

Now practice with someone else.

Session 10: Your Own Company is Better than Bad Company

Socially-well people are able to develop relationships with other people based on mutual interests. However, when you are not comfortable being by yourself, you will tend to develop relationships based on things other than mutual interests.

Identify some of the dysfunctional relationships you have developed out of neediness to be with other people. (Examples of some dysfunctional relationships are: bullying, threats, physical, emotional, verbal and/or sexual abuse, in a relationship out of guilt, no support and/or open communication with another person, co-dependency, blamed for everything, incompatible, needs not met, feeling trapped, etc.)

The relationship	How the relationship was dysfunctional	What I got out of it	Was it worthwhile?
Example: My neighbor	She was constantly dropping in without calling and was very needy.	It was someone to talk with and use up some of my time.	No. She was draining my energy and I needed it to stop.

Describe your plan to limit or decrease the time spent in the relationships that are not worthwhile.

WHAT TO DO?

Whether you enjoy being alone or not:

- Circle items you enjoy doing by yourself or doing with others you do not know.
- ✓ Check items you are willing to try.
- Put a line through the items you would not consider.

<input type="checkbox"/> Antique shop	<input type="checkbox"/> Hike	<input type="checkbox"/> Silversmith
<input type="checkbox"/> Artwork	<input type="checkbox"/> House of worship	<input type="checkbox"/> Sing
<input type="checkbox"/> Astronomy class	<input type="checkbox"/> Investment club	<input type="checkbox"/> Social media
<input type="checkbox"/> Auction	<input type="checkbox"/> Jigsaw puzzle	<input type="checkbox"/> Solitaire
<input type="checkbox"/> Bicycle ride	<input type="checkbox"/> Lapidary	<input type="checkbox"/> Sports
<input type="checkbox"/> Billiard	<input type="checkbox"/> Learn a language	<input type="checkbox"/> Stained glass
<input type="checkbox"/> Bird watch	<input type="checkbox"/> Library	<input type="checkbox"/> Store sales
<input type="checkbox"/> Blog	<input type="checkbox"/> Mah Jongg	<input type="checkbox"/> Swimming
<input type="checkbox"/> Book club	<input type="checkbox"/> Martial arts	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater
<input type="checkbox"/> Bowling league	<input type="checkbox"/> Models	<input type="checkbox"/> Thrift store
<input type="checkbox"/> Card club	<input type="checkbox"/> Movies	<input type="checkbox"/> Travel
<input type="checkbox"/> Ceramics	<input type="checkbox"/> Museums	<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer
<input type="checkbox"/> City club/rotary	<input type="checkbox"/> Musical instrument	<input type="checkbox"/> Walk outside
<input type="checkbox"/> College course	<input type="checkbox"/> Natural health	<input type="checkbox"/> Water aerobics
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer	<input type="checkbox"/> Online scrabble	<input type="checkbox"/> Woodworking
<input type="checkbox"/> Cooking class	<input type="checkbox"/> Photography	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing
<input type="checkbox"/> Crafts	<input type="checkbox"/> Piano lessons	<input type="checkbox"/> Yoga
<input type="checkbox"/> Crossword puzzle	<input type="checkbox"/> Poetry	<input type="checkbox"/> Zoo
<input type="checkbox"/> Cruise	<input type="checkbox"/> Political club	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Dance	<input type="checkbox"/> Pool	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Drumming	<input type="checkbox"/> Quilting	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Exercising	<input type="checkbox"/> Read	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Genealogy	<input type="checkbox"/> Restaurant	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Go to the gym	<input type="checkbox"/> Sewing	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Share with others why you enjoy doing the items you circled and why you would consider the items that you checked.

Session 11: Some funny and simple ways to beat loneliness

From *"The Pocket Guide to Surviving Loneliness – 60 easy steps to follow when you feel like a complete weirdo and total failure"* by Elena Jdanova

1. Congratulate yourself for being on this journey
2. Remember that you deserve better
3. Make it your practice to always seek to improve your state
4. Start taking notes, your thoughts and feelings about loneliness
5. Don't assume everyone else is happy
6. Breathe
7. Consider your content
8. Find your feet
9. Go outside to get some sun and fresh air
10. Walk barefoot
11. Learn to think intentionally
12. Normalize your abnormality (we all experience loneliness)
13. When you feel like a failure, think of thing you **don't want** to succeed at

14. Compare your failures and successes to **your own** failures and successes
15. Count your friends
16. Start taking responsibility for your life
17. Learn to recognize the feeling of hunger and feed yourself as soon as you become aware of it
18. Eat better food
19. Take a pill – if you can ease some of your misery, why not do it?
20. Stop taking pills – if you take too many too often (see a medical professional to help you make these decisions)
21. Get some sleep – tomorrow will be another day
22. Masturbate – a little pleasure goes a long way (THIS REALLY IS IN JDANOVA'S BOOK!!!)
23. Wash the dirty dishes
24. Do the laundry
25. Take the garbage out
26. Get rid of what you don't need
27. Clean your house
28. Buy fresh flowers



29. Get a cat as long as you can be a responsible owner
30. Share a ride
31. Stop and give someone a ride – use good judgement and be safe
32. Sing
33. Take a class
34. Take a class where you'd have to partner up with someone
35. Take a class or a workshop on communication, on relationships, or on dealing with feelings
36. Invent your own "steps" that help you feel better
37. Go to church
38. Practice intentional alone-ness
39. Write a book
40. Invent or make something – gadgets, devices, machines, etc.
41. Go to a crowded place like a park or a busy commercial street
42. Talk to a therapist
43. Consider a house share
44. Feel your feelings
45. Deepen your conversations

46. Listen

47. Talk to your neighbor

48. Share

49. Grow your own food

50. Find a good book to read

51. Give hugs

52. Breed dogs and sell puppies – ensure this is legal where you live and that
you can be a highly responsible breeder and take loving care of pets

53. Start looking for a better job

54. Become an expert on something

55. Get a job in the service industry

56. Get a seriously in-depth book on the psychology of loneliness

57. Study your own psychology and your belief system

58. Understand yourself better

59. Expect periodic setbacks

60. Pay attention to the moments when you do feel good

Session 12: A New Me!

This is the end of the course, and we have 2 additional worksheets to complete. When all combined, it is expected that you will take chances and understand what you can do to “mingle” and engage in activities to reduce your loneliness.

REVERSE YOUR NEGATIVE THINKING

People who experience loneliness often take too much time to dwell on their negative thoughts about themselves and their lives. The good news is that it is possible to turn your negative thinking into more positive thinking.

In the table below, journal your experiences with your negative thoughts. One way to do this is to be mindful of what is happening in your own mind. In this case, mindfulness is simply attending to the stream of thoughts that go through your head when you are lonely. Look at an example:

- Negative thoughts in my head: “people just don’t like me.”
- Feelings that follow: Low self-esteem, emptiness, fear, hopelessness.
- What is the evidence? There is probably no evidence that people don’t like you. Some people connect with you. You will be able to make new friends if you try. Everyone is in contact with people who connect with them and people who don’t.
- How I can reverse my thinking: “I have had friends in the past and I will again.” “I will make friends if I don’t give up and if I continue engaging in social activities, where I can meet new people!”

Now that you have the formula for successfully reversing your negative thinking, try it below:

Negative thoughts in my head	Feelings that follow	What is the evidence?	How can I reverse my thinking?

What negative thoughts do you have about social situations?

When and where do you usually have negative thoughts? Why do you think this happened? What can you do about it?

MY PERSONAL COMMERCIAL

One of the best ways to develop self-confidence is to develop a personal commercial of yourself that you can say when you meet new people.

A 10 - 12 second commercial might go like this:

A neighbor: I'm so sorry I haven't introduced myself yet. I'm John. (extend hand and shake hands) I'm the one with the white fuzzy dog named Daisey. We walk every morning.

Elevator: Hi, I'm Debbie. I love your shirt. Where did you find it?

Just moved: Hi, my name is Ester and I just moved here. I'd love to have a cup of coffee with you to get some referrals in the neighborhood. Would you like to exchange emails?

In general: Thank instructors, service people, anyone who helps you. You never know what comes of it!

Now you try! In the spaces that follow, develop a short commercial of yourself.

Once you have developed your commercial, get together with someone else in the group and take turns telling your commercial to each other.

**MISSION
ACCOMPLISHED**