

Social Isolation: What's in a Name?

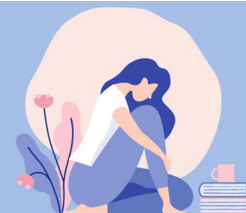
Although related, social isolation and loneliness are not the same thing.



COMMIT TO
Connect

SOCIAL ISOLATION is the lack of social contacts and having few people to interact with regularly.

Social isolation is objective, with measurable factors such as the size of one's social network, the frequency of contact with that network, or the availability of transportation.



LONELINESS is the distressing feeling of being alone or separated.

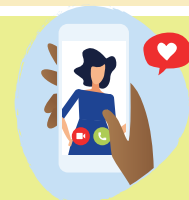
Loneliness is subjective and more personal. It's the feeling of not having the connections, companionship or sense of belonging that we all need as humans.

You can live alone and not feel lonely or socially isolated, and you can feel lonely while being with other people. Both experiences – social isolation and loneliness – are harmful to overall wellbeing, which is why it's so important to build and maintain social connections.



SOCIAL CONNECTIONS are called many things:

- Social inclusion
- Social support
- Community connectedness
- Social cohesion
- Social integration
- Social networks



No matter what you call it, social connectedness is about the relationships we have with others – and how those relationships are helped or hurt by social, economic and political factors.



Never call people who are socially isolated “hermits” or “loners.”

Such labels wrongly cast blame and suggest that someone experiencing social isolation is at fault due to their own decisions or traits.

Social isolation isn't a personal choice or individual problem, but rather an issue that's rooted in community design, social norms and systemic injustices.

Sources: The Social Isolation Learning Network; “Untethered: A Primer on Social Isolation” by David Hsu.