

The Gift of Connection

*Tips and Techniques
to Support Wellbeing and Combat Loneliness*



BREAKTHROUGH
mental health research foundation

At Breakthrough Mental Health Research Foundation, we understand that connection is one of the most powerful tools to combat loneliness and support mental wellbeing.

While the holiday season can bring joy and celebration for many, it can also be a difficult time for those experiencing isolation. But loneliness isn't just confined to Christmas – it's a challenge that can affect people all year round.

That's why we've created this booklet as a special gift to you. Inside, you'll find evidence-based tips and techniques developed by our Breakthrough-funded researchers that can help you or your loved ones create connections and manage feelings of loneliness – during Christmas and beyond.

We hope these insights will offer guidance and support for any time of year, bringing a sense of comfort and connection to those who need it most.



Tips and Techniques



Managing Loneliness for Older Adults
(by Associate Professor Tim Windsor)

Tips for Young People (by Little Heroes Professor of
Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Bridi O'Dea)



Ways to Make a Difference in Your Community

Building Lasting Connections



Managing Loneliness for Older Adults

Insights from Associate Professor Tim Windsor



As we age, life's transitions—such as retirement, health changes, or the loss of loved ones—**can make social connections harder to maintain**. Below are some simple yet effective ways to stay connected and combat loneliness.



Take Care of Your Physical Health

Maintaining your physical health can directly impact your ability to stay socially active. Simple habits like getting enough sleep, eating well, and staying physically active can make it easier to connect with others. The more energetic and physically well you feel, the more likely you are to seek out social activities.



Explore New Activities and Social Groups

There are many opportunities for older adults to get involved in community activities. Your local council or community centre often offers programs for wellbeing, exercise, and social connection. Start small by attending one session, and you might find yourself making new friends along the way.



Volunteering as a Way to Connect

Helping others can be a wonderful way to connect with like-minded people while giving back to the community. Volunteering offers a renewed sense of purpose and provides opportunities for building lasting relationships. Check out your local volunteering hub for opportunities in your area.

Tips for Young People

Insights from Little Heroes Professor of Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Bridi O'Dea



Young people often experience loneliness too, particularly during transitions like finishing school or moving away from home. Below are some ways young people can combat feelings of isolation.



Donate or Volunteer

Giving back to your community, whether through a charity drive or volunteering, can help foster a sense of belonging. Many young people report that helping others through initiatives like Wishing Tree Appeals or food drives brings a sense of connection and purpose.



Reach Out to Who You Haven't Talked to in a While

Sometimes, the simple act of reconnecting with someone—a friend, relative, or neighbour—can lift your spirits. Even a small gesture like sending a holiday message or catching up for a coffee can make a big difference in how you feel.



Practice Small Talk in Social Settings

It might feel awkward at first, but asking questions and offering information about yourself in casual conversations can help you build deeper connections. Over time, these small interactions can blossom into meaningful friendships.

Ways to Make a Difference in Your Community

If you're feeling lonely, it's often helpful to think about how you can make someone else's day brighter. Here are a few simple ideas.



Check in on a Neighbour

A quick visit or phone call can mean the world to someone who's feeling isolated.



Start a Book or Hobby Group

Whether it's online or in-person, gathering with others who share your interests is a great way to bond over common hobbies.



Send a Letter or Card

Writing to a friend or relative, especially during festive seasons, can be a meaningful way to reconnect.

Building Lasting Connections

Loneliness can feel overwhelming, but it's important to remember that **connections – whether big or small – can help build resilience.**

Take it one step at a time. Here are some year-round strategies for nurturing those bonds.



Set Realistic Expectations

Not every relationship will feel perfect, and that's okay. Be patient with yourself and others as you work to grow closer.



Establish Boundaries

While connection is important, so is self-care. Protect your emotional health by setting boundaries.



Seek Help When Needed

If feelings of loneliness persist despite your efforts, it's always okay to seek professional support.



Thank You for Your Support

Because of you, Breakthrough can continue to fund vital research that brings hope to those facing mental health challenges.

Together, we're working to ensure that no one feels forgotten or isolated at any time of year.

We wish you a year filled with connection, support, and wellbeing.

Thank you for being part of our community.

This booklet is your gift from all of us at Breakthrough. Keep it close, share it with someone who might need it, and together, we can help create a life free from mental illness.





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