

Simple Ways to Connect with Others and Reduce Loneliness

It might seem overwhelming to think how to find ways to be social or make more meaningful connections. But taking small steps can make a big difference. Here are some ideas to think about:

- **Try volunteering.** Look for organizations you're interested in that have needs you can help with. For example, animal shelters often need people to walk dogs or play with cats. And local food banks may need people to organize shelves or help visitors find what they need.
- **Consider a meet-up group.** Many cities have meet-up groups organized around activities, interests, or hobbies. You may find groups for hikers, caregivers, people who enjoy board games, or for those who just like drinking coffee.
- **Think about getting a pet.** If you can care for one, a pet can be an excellent companion. The type of pet you choose is up to you. Your local animal shelter can help you find a pet that fits your lifestyle.
- **Shift negative thinking.** When you feel lonely, it's common to have negative thoughts and emotions. But if negative thinking becomes a pattern, it can make you start to believe that the positive changes you're looking for aren't possible. If you can learn to catch negative thinking, you can learn to shift it.
- **Consider seeing a counselor.** It can be hard to make changes in your habits or your thinking on your own. And it can be scary to think about putting yourself "out there" in social situations. If you feel like you need some support getting started, or if loneliness is making it hard for you to function, a counselor can help.

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