

Ideas from
The Older
Men at the
Margins
project.



Ideas for older men on how to beat loneliness and isolation

We all feel lonely sometimes. Sadly, it's something lots of us experience as we get older.

If you're a man and over 65, you might find you feel lonely for different reasons – or it might feel harder to find support or make meaningful connections.

Researchers from the University of Bristol, with support from Age UK, conducted a study with older men who've felt lonely or isolated to find out how they dealt with it. We've used what they told us to write this leaflet.

Let's talk about loneliness

Older men are much less likely to tell someone when they're feeling lonely.

Lots of the men we spoke to said they felt they shouldn't say anything because they didn't want to be a burden. Others felt embarrassed, or that it was their job to 'hold it together'.

Why do men feel lonely?

There are lots of reasons men might feel lonely or socially isolated.

- living alone
- not being in a relationship
- losing a partner
- retiring from work with its associated status and responsibilities
- moving to a new area
- living with health problems or a disability
- caring for someone
- living with hearing loss
- finding it difficult to make or maintain friendships.

It's also common to feel lonely during winter months when long evenings make it harder to leave the house.

Loneliness can have a big impact on both our physical and mental health. It's really important to try to talk to someone about it.

- "Loneliness" can be a difficult word to say or hear. You could talk about friendships instead.
 - Who do you enjoy spending time with? Is there anyone you'd like to see more of or talk to more often?
 - Is there anything stopping you, like not being able to get out of the house or not feeling confident with modern technology?
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Three ways to beat loneliness

The men we spoke to had lots of tips for how they tackle feeling lonely and isolated. These are their top three.

1 Keep busy, with lots of plans throughout the week.

Make sure you're getting out of the house, if you're able to, and try to be with other people. Setting yourself small tasks throughout the day, which include leaving the house at least once, can be really helpful.



2 Spend time on solo hobbies such as reading, painting, photography or gardening.

Watching the television can be a short-term distraction, but keep in mind that regularly watching TV on your own can sometimes make you feel more cut off.

3 Go along to group activities and events.

Local groups can be a great way of doing things you enjoy in the company of others. Going along to a group can be daunting. Lots of people worry they'll feel the 'odd one out', for example they might feel nervous about going to a group alone where lots of other people attending are in couples or already know each other. Others might be concerned about getting to the group or needing to bring a loved one they care for with them. Don't be discouraged. The men we spoke to really valued getting involved in groups they attended, saying it gave them a sense of purpose and helped them meet new people like them.



How to find the right group for you

- See what activities your local Age UK runs. You can find your nearest Age UK by searching with your postcode at www.ageuk.org.uk/local
- Look for groups based around activities you might enjoy. Men's Sheds, Probus, the British Legion, or Walking Sports are all centred around activities where men do things together.
- Think about what interests you or what hobbies you used to enjoy when you were younger. The University of the Third Age has lots of ideas www.u3a.org.uk
- Go back to school! It's never too late to learn something new, so consider if IT classes or adult education might interest you.
- If it's difficult for you to travel or get out of the house, a quick call to group organisers can really help. Some groups might be able to offer transport or lifts to and from events.
- If you have hearing issues, let group organisers know so they can organise meeting places where everyone can hear clearly.
- If you're caring for someone, check whether you can bring them along if you need to. You might also want to think about arranging for someone to provide a bit of care so you can do something just for you – friends, family and local respite services are a good place to start.

For more information on issues affecting people in later life, visit www.ageuk.org.uk or call the Age UK Advice line for free on 0800 678 1602.



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