

Tips for dealing with loneliness in times of corona

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, face-to-face meetings and social contacts to others have been very limited. The desire for more social activity, combined with a negative assessment of the situation or of oneself, can lead to feelings of loneliness. You can find out in the following when this can be the case and what you can do about it.

Lonely vs. alone: When am I lonely?

- Being alone simply means no other people are present. This is an objective condition that doesn't have to be negative: It is possible to be alone and enjoy it without missing the presence of other people.
- Loneliness, on the other hand, is not dependent on whether or not you are alone or with others. When feelings of loneliness come up, your own assessment of the situation plays a central role: If you judge being alone as isolation or rejection, as being left out, not fitting in or not being understood, it is referred to as loneliness. This can be connected to negative emotions such as sadness or fear or be perceived as painful. Therefore, loneliness is a subjective condition.

How can I reduce feelings of loneliness in times of corona?

Get in touch with yourself

- Question your thinking: Find out which situations you feel lonely in and which thoughts might be behind it. Question those thoughts. Develop helpful and realistic alternative thoughts. Here's an example for how you can debunk an unhelpful thought and formulate an alternative for it:

situation	thought	feelings/emotions	alternative thought
I'm going for a walk by myself.	"Nobody likes me, that's why I'm doing something alone. I'm not interesting and likeable enough."	Loneliness, sadness, disappointment	"Just because I'm alone right now doesn't mean no one likes me. I'm doing something nice for myself and don't always need someone to do things with me. It's okay for me to do something alone."

Make yourself aware of these alternative thoughts again and again. You can also write them down on post-its and place them around the apartment, for easier remembering. You can find further tips on how to deal with unhelpful thoughts [here](#).

- You can increase your general sense of well-being by valuing yourself enough to create a structured day (regular times for sleeping, eating, working, and enough time to rest), make your apartment feel comfortable, and groom yourself daily – even if you're not meeting anyone.
- In order to improve your relationship to yourself and strengthen your sense of self-worth, there are some exercises that can help. You can lead a "positive journal" every day, for example, in which you record daily something good that happens to you. That can be small things like a friendly greeting from a neighbor or a nice song in the radio. You can also think of an encouraging saying every day, write it down, and carry it with you for the rest of the day. Or make a list of things you like about yourself, with your strengths and successes. You can find more on the topic of self-worth [here](#) (in German).

- If your everyday life is stressful and hectic, it can be easy to lose sight of your own needs, such as the needs for closeness and social contact. In order to counteract that, you can integrate regular breaks into your day, during which you listen to yourself and adopt a non-judgmental and accepting attitude towards your needs. Mindfulness can be a helpful technique. You can find out what mindfulness is and how you can practice it [here](#).
- Perhaps you'd like to do something but are unable to meet your friends due to the protective measures against the spread of the coronavirus. In that case, plan something nice in order for you to be able to spend the time alone pleasantly. Bake your favorite treat, listen to your favorite music, or watch a movie you love. Give yourself a present or treat yourself to a bath, a walk to your favorite spot or a nice cup of tea. Or try something new: Learn a different language, try out a new kind of sport or a new recipe, watch a tutorial on something new on YouTube, redecorate your apartment.

Take a step toward others

- The situation with coronavirus is an extraordinary time for most of us, and it can be helpful to seek dialogue with others. Be honest about how the current situation is affecting you. Ask how those around you are dealing with the current situation and try to keep an open mind toward others. Communicate your needs clearly, such as "Let's talk more often/stay in touch."
- Stay in contact through other means, such as messenger apps, calls, and video calls. Or write a postcard or a letter.
- You can meet your friends and acquaintances "virtually" as well: Organize game nights or quizzes or watch a movie, a series, a theater performance, or a concert "together". You can do lots of enjoyable activities with others if you include them via a video call.
- Use the chance to activate "old" contacts.
- Look for connections in new ways: contact points could be your faculty or the Studierendenwerk Mainz's [language café](#). Or ask the others in your seminar if they are interested in a chat-group. You can also meet people with similar interests through university groups and clubs. You can find out which university groups there are [here](#). If you want to improve your language skills, find out more about a new culture, and get to know more people, you could try the ISSK's [language tandem](#). You can find out more about how to increase your social interactions during the digital semester through the project #staysociallyconnected. You can find tips, concrete offers, and further information in this [JGU LMS course](#).
- Are you new at the university? [Campus Mainz e.V.](#) has collected a number of ways for those in their first semester to get to know new people (in German).

Literature: Wolf, Doris (2003). *Einsamkeit überwinden. Von innerer Leere zu sich und anderen finden*. Pal.