

Support Guide

Loneliness



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It is OK to feel lonely from time to time, the vast majority of people will experience feelings of loneliness at some point. Feelings of loneliness are deeply personal and so everyone's experience is different.

A broad definition of loneliness is the feeling you get when you feel the need for social interaction, relationships and shared experience. Loneliness does not have to be the same as being alone. You may choose to be alone, with little social interaction, and be perfectly content. Others, in the same situation, may find limited social interaction makes them feel lonely. Counter intuitively some people can feel lonely in very crowded places. These feelings can be linked to feelings of anonymity as well as a lack of interpersonal relationships with those around. People can often experience feelings of loneliness when studying at University. Changing your life patterns, the new degree of independence, different social circles and being away from friends and family can all contribute to feelings of loneliness. Feeling burdened by your loneliness can be draining and undermine your self-esteem.

Tips to avoid and cope with loneliness

✓ Take small steps

Start off by going somewhere like a cafe, the cinema, the library or a sports event where you can be around people, but not be expected to talk to them – simply being around people is sometimes enough to help with feelings of loneliness





✓ **Make the first step**

Try to say 'hello', or even just smile, at people you recognise on your way to lectures or in your classes, that can make it easier to later strike up a conversation.

✓ **Reach out**

If you are feeling alone it's tempting to think nobody wants to be in contact with you. The reality is often that friends, family and neighbours will appreciate receiving an invitation to come and spend some time interacting. If you miss someone, having a chat over the phone can be the next best thing to seeing them in person.

✓ **Fill you time**

It can help you feel less lonely if you plan the days ahead and put activities in your diary to look forward to each day, such as a walk in the park or going to a local coffee shop, library, sports centre, cinema or museum.

✓ **Try new activities**

You can try activities that you enjoy, as well as things you are new at, both for the experience and to widen the opportunities for social contact. If there isn't an activity or society for your passion, why not try to start one, it can be easier than you think. For some classes or activities there is no expectation that you will need to directly interact with others.

✓ **Help others**

Doing things for other people can make us feel good about ourselves and can decrease loneliness. Helping others through volunteering or social outreach can not only help to build both short- and long-term relationships but can also have positive societal impacts

✓ **Balance online and face-to-face contact**

If your friends and family live far away it is a good idea to stay in touch. It is easy to share emails and photos with family and friends and have video chats using online services. You can make new online "friends" or reconnect with old friends on social media sites. Going online to connect with others safely can often feel like a less challenging way to reduce your loneliness. For the best results try to balance online activities with face-to-face experiences.

✓ **Take note**

You may find the ideas above useful but remember that different approaches will work for different people at different times. Only try what you feel comfortable with and try not to put too much pressure on yourself.

✓ **Seek help**

Feeling lonely can, in some instances, have a negative impact on your mental health, especially if these feelings have lasted a long time. Sometimes loneliness can be a symptom of a social phobia or social anxiety which could lead to a lack of meaningful social contact. See a doctor if your feelings of loneliness are prolonged and causing you to struggle to cope with low mood, stress, or anxiety.

Speak to someone at **the BUE Student Hub Counselling Service** where advisors can help you with the techniques above.

You can pass by our offices at the BUE Library Lower Floor.

Not on campus and want more information? You can contact us anytime via our email address **thestudenthub@bue.edu.eg**

The student Hub is a safe, friendly and free space for you. We are here to help you. We are listening.

