What is loneliness?

This activity is an exercise to help participants to identify and understand what loneliness is through using a group brainstorming exercise. The activity will support the participants facilitate the understanding and confidence.

60 minutes approximately

Loneliness

8 -12 participants

Aim

To give participants an introduction to the concept of (youth) loneliness and identify and articulate what loneliness means to them.

By the end of this activity participants will be able to:

- Define what loneliness means.

- Compare the difference between loneliness and aloneness.

14 Suitable for 14 + (key stage 4 and above)

Session overview: What is loneliness?

Time	Activity description	Group set up	Aim(s)	Resources
5	Introduction to session/project group contract setting	Whole group	To set group culture and provide session context	Flipchart & pens Space - such as a hall!
10 (Ice breaker)	We recommend using 'Describe you'	Whole group	To support participants to engage in main session	Ice breaker section resources chosen by facilitator and /or participants
15	**Part 1:** what is loneliness?	Breakout groups	Explore the meaning of loneliness	Flipchart paper/pens Activity sheet 1
10	**Part 2:** what is aloneness	Whole group	Looking at some positives and negatives of being alone	Resource sheets 5 and 6
12	**Part 3:** Two videos of being alone and loneliness	Whole group	Provide a thought-provoking look at loneliness and aloneness	Videos - links on activity sheet
5	**Part 4:** Has this session matched the learning outcome(s)?	Whole group	Confirm that outcomes have been met.	Session plan outcomes, flipchart and pens
5	**Evaluation:** We recommend using the 'target' evaluation	Whole group	How did the young person feel about the session went?	From the evaluation section resources

- Pens/pencils / flipchart paper / plain paper and Post-it notes
- Activity sheets 1 & 2
- Resource sheets 3-6
- Tablet / laptop / projector
- Wi-fi/data

Hints
- Print copies of: 'What is loneliness?' (activity sheets 1 and 2) for each participant.
- To support resource sheet 3, you can have additional magazines available and/or printed images from the internet, etc.

Youth Achievement Award (YAA) or "Participant Journal" - if a participant is taking part in completing a journal or an accreditation such as a Bronze Youth Achievement Award, please ensure that they are aware they are to keep the copies of activity sheets 1 and 2 as evidence of them engaging in the session.

All resource sheets are available as a presentation, and an images can be enlarged to meet the needs of your session (and used with a projector or another device that can display in the landscape orientation).

Resources:

- **Icebreaker:** describe you
- **Activity sheet 1:** what is loneliness?
- **Activity sheet 2:** what is aloneness?
- **Activity sheet 3:** video on aloneness and loneliness
- **Activity sheet 4:** outcomes review
- **Facilitator notes:** supporting activity work
- **Participant activity sheet** - for each participant, as required.
- **Resource sheet 1:** definition of loneliness quote
- **Resource sheet 2:** definition of aloneness quote
- **Resource sheet 3:** definition of social isolation quote
- **Resource sheet 4:** a poem of aloneness vs loneliness
- **Evaluation:** target evaluation
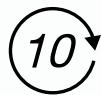
10 This symbol represents how many minutes approximately to spend on an activity.

If young people are working away from the main group, print and send out the session resources, evaluation and other sessions you are planning to use.

If you have the required skills and equipment, this session works well using the findings from the mind-mapping exercises in **step 1 and 2 from the activity sheet 1 & activity sheet 2. They are a .PNG (image) file** so can be uploaded to a **Whiteboard** /**Jamboard** or other platform as a background image for a digital adaptation if you have the skills and resources to do so.

Padlet: can be a great resource for many online activities and for this one its perfect! Facilitators can create a wall where participants can collectively collaborate in the physical space and /or online.
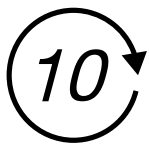
Describe you.

REACH OUT 2.0
making connections that count

To start, have the participants think about the identifying words below. Using the first letter of their preferred name, have them think about what word(s) best describe their feelings about themselves today and why this is. Check whether they are happy to share that word out loud with the group or write it down and show others.

Some words (identifying or describing words) to get particpants started could be:

- Willing
- Helpful
- Intelligent
- Strong
- Rare
- Friendly
- Lucky
- Realistic
- Anxious
- Curious
- Secret
- Extreme
- Loud

- Impossible
- Typical
- Relevant
- Dangerous
- Unusual
- Impressive
- Asleep
- Embarrassed
- Lonely
- Mad
- Empty
- Silly
- Pretend

- Existing
- Famous
- Hungry
- Boring
- Alive

An example would be "Dangerous Dan" — because he does not think of the consequences.

Part 1: what is loneliness?

Ice breakers (10)

We recommend using - 'Describe you'.

What is loneliness? (15)

In this activity, participants are asked to access a room that can accommodate movement. Activity sheets 1 and 2 are to be given out to each participant and is a useful prompt to consider whether they would like to work on their own or in smaller groups.

Break out groups

The facilitator to split participants into smaller breakout groups ideally with 2-3 participants in each breakout group (according to group size). Hand out flipchart paper, Post-it notes and pens to each group. Place the images from resource 3 on each table or on the wall in the room, where all groups can see them clearly. Facilitators may want to consider magnifying the images to A3.

Provide each breakout group: flipchart paper, pens, pens, pencils, Post-it notes, paper for doodling, Blu Tack, etc.

Discussion questions:

Ask one participant in each group (that is willing to scribe) to write "WHAT IS LONELINESS?" in the middle of the flip chart paper. Allocate approximately 15-minutes for participants to discuss in their breakout group and address the question 'what is loneliness?'. The discussion can also be captured by creative methods (e.g., drawing/doodles of reasons, identifiers, and location if participants are more comfortable using these).

Before the activity begins, the facilitator will ask each breakout group to nominate a participant to feedback their groups' discussion/thoughts (or the whole group can do it as a collective.) The facilitator will give each breakout group, in turn, an opportunity to inform the whole group what they have thought about and explain that they should aim to **provide 3 ideas** to the main group (these can be put on to Post-it notes or written directly onto the flipchart paper).

Support for the discussion

These could be reasons for loneliness, identifiers of loneliness, words, phrases (on facilitator notes) or even drawings of locations or people (available on resource sheet 3).

Part 1: what is loneliness?

Feedback!

During the feedback, each group member should take turns in writing or designate someone to write on the flip chart paper (this can also be the facilitator, if required).

The facilitator asks the participants whether they agree with the statements/drawings on the flipchart paper and if they would add anything more to it or change anything.

Facilitator then offers a definition of loneliness

Definition of loneliness

See resource sheet 1: definition of "loneliness" **(p 12)**

Part 2: what is aloneness?

10

The facilitator asks the whole group to come together around the flipchart paper in a semi-circle and asks the group: "what does it mean to be alone?". The facilitator reads the Sam Woofle Poem Aloneness vs Loneliness - a poem by Simba8 - All Poetry by Simba8   (Activity Sheet 2 / presentation).

The facilitator will ask the following questions as a discussion:

What are the positives of being alone?

Support for the facilitator on positives - being alone is not always a bad thing:

Solitude - walking in the wilderness or travelling

Being creative - our best ideas without criticism

Thinking time - leaving our brain to recharge

Without others - Being independent

Privacy - having time to ourselves

Stillness - being calm

What are the negatives of being alone?

Support for the facilitator on negatives:

Becoming overly inner critical - self - criticism.

Spending too much time on your own can lead to changes in the brain, and potentially impacts the immune system as a potential result of loneliness (The neurobiology of social distance: Why loneliness may be the biggest threat to survival and longevity, June 2020.)

Sometimes we need to be with other people. (Cacioppo and Patrick, 2008)

Part 3: videos on aloneness and loneliness

The facilitator hands out activity sheet 2 and informs participants that they will have 12 minutes to do this activity. The facilitator to show two YouTube videos to the whole group or, if more appropriate, participants can scan the QR codes on activity sheet 1.

Facilitator then offers a definition

See resource sheet 5: definition of "Aloneness" **page 13**

Positive exploration of aloneness - <u>What is Loneliness?</u> - YouTube from headspace app. **(Playing time from start to 1.01 minutes)** description of video? And perhaps some points from the video to think about. (**Please note: the video contains adverts**).

If you're lonely, you are not alone - <u>https://youtu.be/wbKTHkVvzxE</u> from Brightside. **(Playing time: from start to 9.12 minutes)** description of video and perhaps some points from the video to think about as a group. **(Please note: the video contains adverts).**

Re – visiting & finisher for the main part of the session

Part 4: has this session achieved the intended outcomes?

5

The facilitator refers to the learning outcome(s) for this session. Do participants all agree on the outcomes have been met? The facilitator can 'test' that learning outcomes have been met by a 'pop' quiz with prizes, etc.

Two questions to ask participants to reflect on:

- What is loneliness?
- What is the difference between loneliness and aloneness?

Note: For evidence for a Youth Achievement Award, facilitators should record this feedback and observe participants giving suggestions/answers.

Endings:

Facilitator(s) thank participants for their contributions and give a brief introduction to the next session, so participants know what to expect/give them something to look forward to.

Facilitator to invite any last questions from the group and remind them that there is a range of information and guidance support available to them (see posters) and urge them to seek any further support from them, their youth workers, teachers, parents, their GP, etc.

Facilitator Notes

Activity sheet 1 -3: what is loneliness?

Support participants to understand that: The session will require splitting the larger main group into breakout groups to enable them to hear a range of ideas and opinions. It is always useful to regularly remind participants not to use personal examples that they are not comfortable with others knowing about them (refer to group contract).

There may be a need for setting/revisiting the learning **group contract** and this should be negotiated and agreed upon at the start of each session. Explain to the group that this is a 'dynamic' process, and the contract can be revised and reviewed at any time.

Facilitators should **'check in'** with breakout groups throughout the session to clarify the task(s) and encourage conversation between participants.

This session enables participants to capture their own thoughts and ideas in writing and/or verbally. To ensure that all participants have an opportunity to engage in the group, the facilitator is to offer both options (**considering the literacy levels of the group**).

Videos can be a useful tool to support participants and, if you can, use the videos supplied in your delivery. These are also available on activity one sheet as QR codes for facilitators and participants to scan. Facilitator to consider and **plan for participants without access to appropriate devices/data** to ensure all participants can engage in this activity.

This session is focusing on the **generalised term 'loneliness'** and therefore can include others within the community. This will be important for future sessions when connecting with others.

If the group go 'off topic' (there may be issues around social isolation and loneliness that are out of our control: natural disasters, who are family are how others feel, etc. Facilitator can assure participants that this is further explored in session 2 (What does loneliness look like?).

Activity sheet 1 - participants can be kept by individuals to use the QR codes in the future. **Facilitator to keep a copy of 'What is loneliness?' (activity sheet 1- participants)** to reflect on and as evidence of the activity to support accreditation, etc.

Quotes for facilitator - negatives about aloneness

"The absence of social connection triggers the same, primal alarm bells as hunger, thirst and physical pain." Cacioppo, J. T. and Patrick, W. (2008).

Potential difficulties

Participants may have limited understanding/experience of loneliness and may see it as an issue for others (e.g., older people, etc.).

Past experiences (traumas such as exploitation, negative relationships, risk-taking) may be raised this session and future sessions. Therefore, support will need to be provided or an opportunity to access a safe space to explore, challenge and be challenged in their assumptions, bias, etc.

Facilitator Notes

Activity sheets 1 -3: what is loneliness?

- **Some examples of reasons why people experience loneliness could include:** sudden changes in environment or routine, spending too much time on social media, becoming a new parent, exams, moving away, bereavement, family or friendship breakdown, long term health condition, etc.

- **Some examples of identifiers of loneliness:** stress, depression, decrease in memory, anti-social behaviour, poor decision- making, substance misuse, poor mental health, etc.

- **Support participants to be aware that**: the images have been used as a representation of a situation, feeling or environmental and are only used as an example that can be expanded on.

- Further resources for locations and people can be found in Session 2 (What does loneliness look like?).

Definitions available to print out on resource sheets 1-3 or a presentation (all downloadable).

Statistics on loneliness - Children's and young people's experiences of loneliness - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk) We-are-lonely-but-not-alone-Research.pdf (coopfoundation.org.uk) 2019.

- Further reading: Cacioppo, J. T. and Patrick, W. (2008) Loneliness human nature and the need for social connection. New York Norton.
- The neurobiology of social distance: Why loneliness may be the biggest threat to survival and longevity (no date) ScienceDaily. Available at: https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/06/200609104253.htm (Accessed: 3 September 2021).

Participant Activity Sheet 1

PARTICIPANT NAME:

WHAT IS LONELINESS?

Be Creative?

WORDS, PHRASES, OR EVEN DRAWINGS

There is no wrong answer so please add what makes sense to you

REASONS FOR LONELINESS

1.

2.

3.

Just make a list

IDENTIFIERS OF LONELINESS

1.

2.

3.

LOCATIONS AND PEOPLE

WHAT DO YOU THINK LONELINESS IS?

1.

2.

3.

POSITIVE EXPLORATION OF ALONENESS– WHAT IS LONELINESS? – YOUTUBE FROM HEADSPACE APP (FIRST 1.01 MINUTES)

NEGATIVE STORY OF LONELINESS – IF YOU FEEL LONELY, YOU'RE NOT ALONE FROM BRIGHTSIDE (FIRST 9.12 MINUTES)

Resource sheet 1 : Definition of "loneliness"

'A subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. It happens when we have a mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that we have, and those that we want.' (Welsh Government, 2020).

We may define aloneness as – is a sense of comfort and ease when in your own company and links to solitude i.e., someone who may spend time in the countryside as they feel at peace. (There are many versions of this, but best represents what this session refers to.)

Social isolation is an objective measure of the number of contacts that people have. It is about the quantity and not quality of relationships.People may choose to have a small number of contacts. Ageuk.org.uk

Resource Sheets 4 : a poem - Aloneness vs Loneliness by Simba8

Aloneness vs Loneliness

To be truly alone does not just mean to be alone from others, it also include being alone from your poisons, prejudices, jealousy, hurts, anger, ambitions, fears, hopes, ego and your thoughts. Once you can drop all this baggage then only can you hope to truly understand what it is like to experience aloneness. Aloneness is vastly different to loneliness.

Like water which can clearly mirror the sky and the trees only so long as its surface is undisturbed, the mind can only reflect the true image of the self when it is tranquil and wholly relaxed. A mind that has understood the whole movement of thought becomes extraordinarily quiet, absolute silent. Silence comes when the mind is no longer seeking, no longer caught in the process of becoming.

The mind can never experience the new, and so the mind must utterly still.
What is important is to be inwardly very simple, very austere, which is to have a mind not clogged with beliefs, with fears, with innumerable wants, for only such a mind is capable of real thinking, of exploration and discovery.

Stillness that is induced, enforced, is still not stillness at all. It is like putting a child in the corner - superficially he may be quiet, but inwardly he is boiling. So a mind that is made quiet, and stillness that is induced can never uncover that creative state in which reality comes in to being.

To observe, to watch, to give you whole attention to something beautiful, your mind must be free of preoccupations, must it not?
It must not be occupied with problems, with worries with speculations. It is only when the mind is very quiet that you can really observe, for then the mind is sensitive to extraordinary beauty, and perhaps here is a clue to our problem of freedom.

If you want to take a long journey, you must carry very little, if you want to climb to a great height, you must travel light.

by Simba
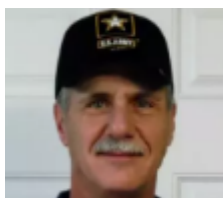
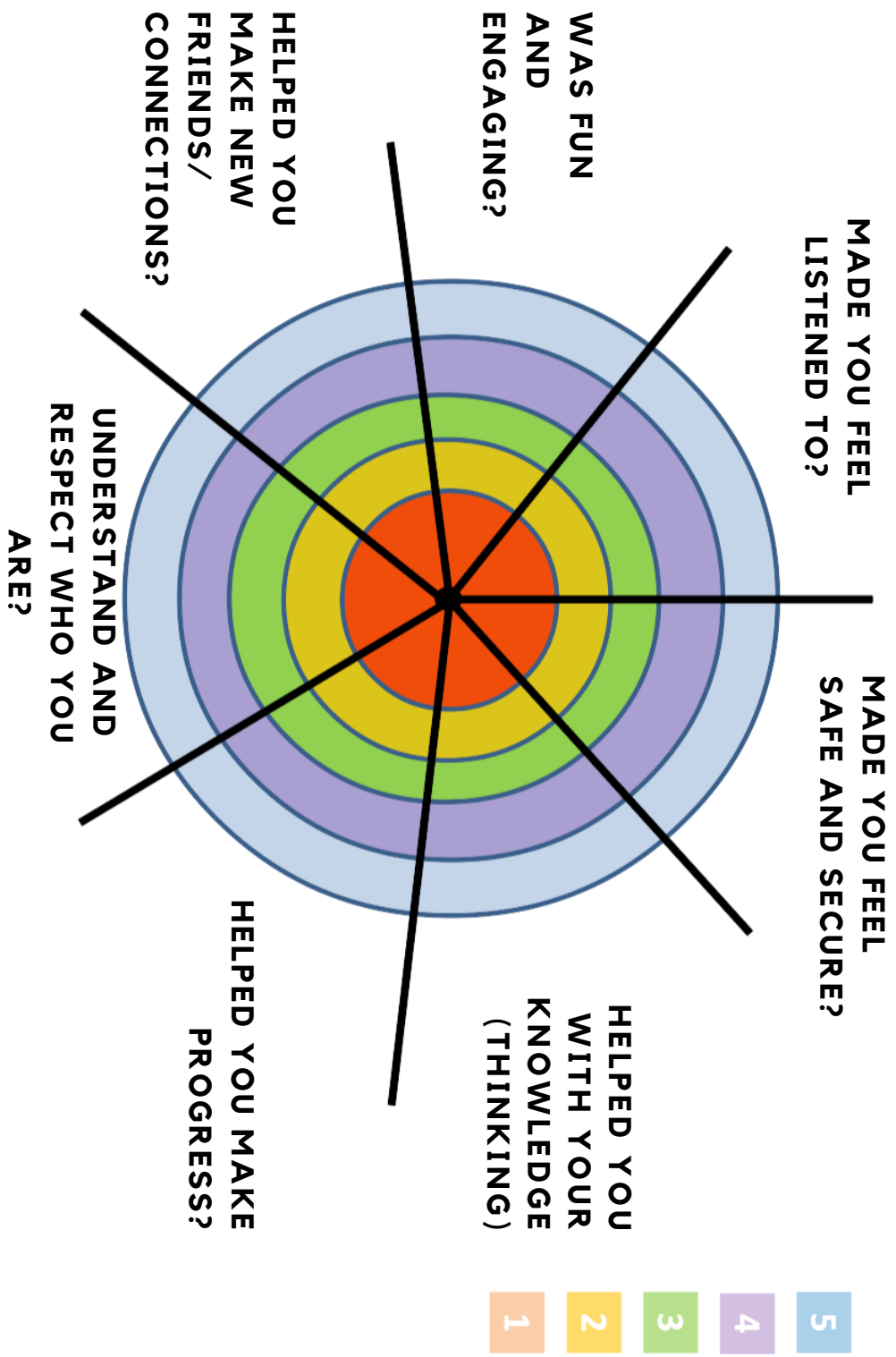**Aloneness vs Loneliness by Simba8**

To be truly alone does not just...

Target Evaluation

ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5 — WHERE 1 IS REALLY USEFUL (NEAREST THE BULLSEYE!) AND 5 IS NOT VERY USEFUL — PLEASE RATE HOW MUCH THE REACHOUT 2.0 SESSION:

WAS FUN AND ENGAGING?

HELPED YOU MAKE NEW FRIENDS/ CONNECTIONS?

UNDERSTAND AND RESPECT WHO YOU ARE?

HELPED YOU MAKE PROGRESS?

HELPED YOU WITH YOUR KNOWLEDGE (THINKING)

MADE YOU FEEL SAFE AND SECURE?

MADE YOU FEEL LISTENED TO?

1 2 3 4 5

Target Evaluation

REACH OUT 2.0

making connections that count

HOW DID WE DO TODAY?

ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5 — WHERE 1 IS EXCELLENT AND 5
IS POOR —
PLEASE RATE THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF THE
REACHOUT 2.0 SESSION:

THE QUALITY OF THE
SESSION/ACTIVITY

YOUR OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE
SESSION/ACTIVITY

HOW MUCH YOU
ENJOYED THE
SESSION/ACTIVITY

1 2 3 4 5

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