TALKING ABOUT LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION
Guidelines for media

We welcome opportunities for loneliness and social isolation to be talked about in the public arena. They are terms however that are easily confused, which can lead to perpetuating myths and misconceptions.

Ending Loneliness Together has developed these guidelines to support media and the public in talking about loneliness and social isolation accurately.

Terminology

Loneliness is a distressing **feeling** that arises when your current relationships do not meet your social needs. We may all feel lonely at some stage of our life, however when loneliness persists it can become harmful to our health and wellbeing.
It's not about being alone, we can be surrounded by people and still feel lonely.

Definition of loneliness adopted by Ending Loneliness Together:

A subjective unpleasant or distressing feeling of a lack of connection to other people, along with a desire for more, or more satisfying social relationships.

Badcock, J. C., Holt-Lunstad, J., Garcia, E., Bombaci, P. & Lim, M. H. Position statement: addressing social isolation and loneliness and the power of human connection. (2022). https://www.gilc.global/general-6

Social isolation refers to the **number** of social relationships and social interactions we have. It is something we can measure, for example, how many people you connected with in a day. Social isolation can increase the risk if loneliness however, not everyone who is alone will feel lonely, for example, people may choose "alone time" to take a break and recharge.

Definition of social isolation adopted by Ending Loneliness Together:

Objectively fewer social relationships, social roles, group membership, and infrequent social interaction.

Badcock, J. C., Holt-Lunstad, J., Garcia, E., Bombaci, P. & Lim, M. H. Position statement: addressing social isolation and loneliness and the power of human connection. (2022). https://www.gilc.global/general-6

LONELINESS AWARENESS WEEK AUSTRALIA

TALKING ABOUT LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

Guidelines for media

Depicting Loneliness

The stigma of loneliness has a negative effect on the people experiencing it and prevents people from seeking the help they need early. The following image and language guidelines have been put together to encourage safe and accurate conversations about loneliness.

AVOID

- Showing **images of a person in isolation.** This is not accurate as you can be surrounded by people and still feel lonely.
- Portraying people as **shy, introverted or somehow flawed.** Avoid terms such as loner. This is not accurate as loneliness is largely influenced by external factors outside of an individual's control.
- Using the term **lonely people.** Say "People who feel lonely" or 'people who experience loneliness'.
- Promoting loneliness as an **issue only older people experience.** It affects all age groups, and research shows people aged 18-25 and 45-54 are most vulnerable.
- **Trivialising loneliness.** We know that ongoing or chronic loneliness has serious implications on health and wellbeing.
- Suggesting a **one size fits all solution.** Just because joining a group helped one person, does not mean it will help someone else.

DO

- Portray loneliness as a **normal human emotion.** Loneliness is a feeling that we can't see - the best way to know if someone is lonely is to ask them.
- Promote that **loneliness is common and can affect anyone.** It affects approximately 1 in 3 Australians of all ages and stages of life.
- Encourage solutions that are the **responsibility of all of us**, not just the person who feels lonely. A sense of belonging and meaningful social connection in our community, schools, and workplaces are also key protective factors against loneliness.
- **Share helpline information and the Ending Loneliness Together Directory.** It is important for people experiencing loneliness to have avenues for support and making meaningful connections with others.