



Mental Health Support with MYB

Surviving Loneliness & Isolation

Issue Four – April 2020

Information about loneliness and how to combat it during the Covid-19 lockdown

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Minding Your Business is a part of the mental health support charity, ESRA Limited

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Surviving Loneliness & Isolation

Minding Your Business (MYB) offers Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England training and bespoke mental health and wellness courses, presented both online via webinars, and in person. All profits from MYB go to **ESRA Limited**, a mental health charity (number 281004) which focuses on getting people back into work, or remaining in work, after suffering from mental ill health.

In these challenging times, where many of us are working from home, maybe feeling isolated or dealing with unusual circumstances and ill health, either of our own or others, we should never worry about asking for help.

Loneliness and Isolation during the Covid-19 Lockdown

Many insightful and detailed articles have been written about loneliness and isolation, and I will add some links to some of those near the end of this item. But in this week's **Minding Your Business** newsletter, we are going to look at how we are coping with our forced isolation in this covid-19 lockdown – what we can do, what we are doing and where we can go if we need help.

About loneliness

In the dictionary, loneliness is described as “sadness because one has no friends or company” and Wikipedia tells us that “loneliness is an unpleasant emotional response to perceived isolation – often associated with an unwanted lack of connection and intimacy”, with isolation described as “the act of separating somebody/something; the state of being separate’.

Continued...

CONTACTS PHONE NUMBERS



HELPLINES SUPPORTING LONELINESS

The Samaritans

116 123

The Silver Line

0800 470 8 090

(providing info, help & friendship to older people but no strict age limits)

Mind

0300 123 3393



**Charities
supporting
loneliness**



**greatgettogether
.org**

mind.org.uk

redcross.org.uk

**artandhealing.
org**

ageuk.org.uk

**marmaladetrust.
org**

Continued...

About loneliness

Of course, some of us will enjoy being alone (“having no one else present”) and it can be great in small doses, but how are you really coping during this extended period?

We often hear that you can have great interaction and lots of friends yet still feel lonely, or be on your own enjoying your own company but you’d be alone. Loneliness can be a temporary feeling or something that controls every waking moment.

Having friends in our lives is an asset, and those friends and friendships are still there but during this lockdown, the way in which we keep in touch and socialise has had to change. We can’t just ‘pop’ out for a coffee and a chat, spend an evening on the squash court, meet our friends at a club (dance, sports or otherwise), jump in the car or on a plane to visit loved ones or go on holiday, or join colleagues for (real) face to face get-togethers – all things we may previously have taken for granted. Now we need to seek interaction and connections through other means.

In normal circumstances, psychologists would tell us that social media and online tools, there to help us feel connected, are actually having the opposite effect, but I think you’ll agree that right now, video apps and online groups are actually one of the few mediums that we can control and enjoy in our own homes.



What can be done to help combat the feeling of loneliness and isolation

- **Make real life connections**

Under 'normal' circumstances, we improve connections by meeting and talking to people and usually we will put away our distractions such as mobile phones and devices, so that we can concentrate and give our undivided attention to the other person or people. Now that we are using our devices more than ever to interact, just ensure that you don't get distracted by another of your devices. Unexpected interruptions are just part of life, especially when working from home and we can be reminded that there have been numerous TV interviews where the kids or dogs have appeared in their noisy glory at the most inopportune moments! Laugh, move on and then continue. These connections are so important, not only in business but in friendships too.

- **Share the moment**

Has something happened that you would like to share because it made you laugh or feel particularly happy? Then share it! It doesn't have to be posted on social media but a text to a friend or a WhatsApp message to a family member, can have be a really positive moment, and by making this 'connection' it can help to overcome loneliness.

- **Walk and Talk**

No, don't break the social distancing rules, but when you take your hour-long exercise outside, say hello to those you pass (at least 2 meters away, of course). Again, you are making a connection and these small moments will start to make you feel less lonely. Conversations can develop, and even if they don't now, when social distancing isn't necessary, you may be able to develop these small connections into friendships.

- **Actively engage online**

Rather than just surfing the web looking for 'things', think about what you like to do with others and how you can use the web to interact. I'm thinking games and chat rooms specific to a hobby, or groups where you can be supported or offer support to others. Every human link, however small, will help you feel a little less isolated and lonely.

- **Video Chat**

Until the lockdown, not many people used to using apps such as **zoom**, **Houseparty** or **WhatsApp** video calling (to name just a few apps on the market). Whilst in the national and international business market (in particular), these online meetings have developed significantly over recent years, yet these applications hadn't really moved over into our personal lives. Now they are the life line to and for many! Our MYB team have WhatsApp video meetings at least twice a week, and each time we have to wear a hat (makes us laugh!). One of us has weekly dinners with friends using zoom, another has a "Friday Night Not Out" with a group of old school friends living in Canada, Wales, England and Germany between 7-8pm UK time with a glass of beer (or not) - there are zoom exercise classes, family get-togethers, Happy Birthday surprises etc!



- **Make the first move – be brave!**

Be the person who makes the first contact– not the one sitting waiting for someone else to do it! You have to be brave. Just a quick text asking if a person is free for a ‘catch-up’ at a specific time of day, can then be followed by a call or video chat at the agreed time. It’s the ideal ice-breaker.
- **Eat Well and Exercise**

This always crops up with any wellbeing article but it is so true. It is imperative that you eat well and keep hydrated. Keeping your physical health in as good a condition as possible, helps to support your mental health too.
- **Join a group**

It could be a sports group running virtual or real-life challenges, or a discussion on patchworking or gardening. It’s great to participate in something where everyone involved is like-minded, and even if temporarily, this can really help push aside the feeling of loneliness.
- **Downtime**

There are many wonderful ways to connect online as we have discussed, but also remember to have time away from your devices so you aren’t bombarded with statistics and information that you only need to really dip in and out of. Set a time in the evening, when you switch off your phone – and if you can, leave it outside of your bedroom at night, to help aid uninterrupted sleep!
- **Try to have good sleep**

A side effect of loneliness and mental health issues, can be tiredness. There are many things you can try, but if you need to set your alarm, make sure you have to get out of bed to switch it off. It will make you more alert and less tempted to roll over and go back to sleep! And make sure you make your bed – this won’t help with loneliness but it will make you feel more positive throughout the day, when you have to look at it!
- **Watch a film**

Make it a classic that you can discuss with other people, or a happy film to make you feel good. What haven’t you watched recently?
- **Volunteer**

By offering to help others, you can also help yourself. You could join the Royal Volunteer Service (RVS) who recently accepted about three quarters of a million UK volunteers to help in various roles in the community. Also have a look online at what is happening locally – is there a project you can help with or a group you can join online? You will be making connections and this will help dispel that loneliness feeling.



What we are doing

Last week, I asked, “what are you doing to combat possible loneliness and the feeling of isolation – how are you keeping busy as you try to fight boredom?”

Here are your magnificent responses:

- I’m using some time to take advantage of a number of theatre shows that are being streamed on the internet - I love the theatre and musicals
- I’m reconnecting with colleagues and friends who I’ve not spoken to for a while and making sure that I reach out to elderly family and friends too
- Through church I’ve connected with a number of people from the congregation who I don’t usually cross paths with. A quick chat on the phone every few days is lovely
- I have probably spoken to some friends more than I normally would by Zoom or Houseparty. I wouldn’t have done this before but will hopefully continue to do so when we can’t meet up due to busy lifestyles
- We have chatted to family via WhatsApp which we wouldn’t normally do
- Messaging via WhatsApp, Facebook or texting. With some people more than normal, some people less than normal
- Haven’t done it yet, but the children will be sending letters to their grandparents with some photos which we know they will love
- Spending more time as a family, playing games, going for walks (& sometimes seeing people we know for a brief “hello”) & watching movies
- I’m volunteering. Meeting people I wouldn’t normally see. Nice to get out as well
- People on walks are friendlier. Brief chats or hello from a distance
- We have exercise programmes going on in our house
- We have fully embraced online social meet-ups and have a weekly Zoom session with my extended family, spanning the US, Spain, Scotland and England. It is the first time in over 10 years that we have all been 'together' and that would never have happened in normal circumstances
- We have fortnightly get-togethers with two different groups of friends and my husband has a weekly team pub quiz online. While meeting online is not the same as face to face, it has been a brilliant way of having some much-needed social contact and also being able to check in with people to make sure all is OK
- I love the solitude and my own company, and I live in a beautiful environment. But one thing I have tasked myself to do each day is go through the contacts on my phone and message, email or text someone out of the blue that I haven't heard from for ages. It has been really nice to reconnect
- I’m cooking more than ever – and enjoying it, gardening – especially as I know I’ll reap the rewards in a few months and it’s a way to enjoy the sunshine and listen to the hubbub around me
- I’m new to the area, but before lockdown, I met an older lady down the road who helped me by taking in deliveries. I can now repay this kindness by helping out with her shopping. I know that she is struggling with boredom and the isolation of this situation



- Spending time walking and exploring the woods close to our home with our 3 young children, collecting beautiful flowers and watching them play on a rope swing
- I have switched off the TV and read 4 books already! Who knew how lovely it would be not watching telly? Cannot remember the last time I finished a book. The Choice by Edith Eger was particularly amazing and would highly recommend. Book 5 is now waiting to be read.
- Staying in contact regularly with friends, and my children facetimeing school friends
- My husband has the bbq out and he is constantly cooking something on it – our new favourite is cheese toasted wraps 😊
- I'm using zoom to continue all my weekly exercise classes as I'm determined to maintain my normal schedule so I look reasonably OK when I emerge!
- When having our daily walk we chat to everyone we meet – waving, smiling, letting them and us know that we are in all this together – community spirit has been very uplifting
- Chatting to neighbours over the fence & collecting raspberry plants one neighbour left out for us all
- Joe Wickes' morning exercises. Actually, my husband and children do it, but I have been loving watching them enjoy it and love seeing people come up with ideas like this to keep us entertained. Jamie Oliver has had a cookery show showing us how we can cook with anything in the house, and I'm now making my own homemade oven chips – learning new skills!
- The food shopping is sometimes hit and miss but we're trying new things & broadening our taste buds
- I challenge myself every day, to 30 minutes exercise and fresh air blast power walking up the hill near my house – great cardio workout. This helps offset my weekend baking session. I never usually have time to bake, but now I do and I enjoy it
- I've planted up all the left-over seeds from previous years that I had lurking at the bottom of my seed box in the greenhouse. To my surprise a lot of them have taken, so I'm looking forward to some colour in my garden plus a glut of tomatoes
- I've been using zoom to keep in contact with lots of family and friends; even my 89-year-old dad has mastered the technology and is using it to attend his weekly Rotary Club meetings
- I didn't even know that Zoom existed until 5 weeks ago! Now I exercise by it almost daily, with Zumba and Clubercise classes run by a local fitness instructor, and I've been connecting the family when it's birthday time, and inviting other family members who live a long way away, to join us for a sing song!
- Dog walking used to be a solitary job, but now the household comes too. One dog is too old for multiple walks, but both the woofs are very happy having us at home
- I've started to learn Greek. I've meant to for about 30 years! I have my own test subject, but know he'll just be rolling on the floor with laughter at my pronunciations – but it'll keep me busy!
- When the call went out for voluntary NHS responders, I didn't apply immediately as I thought you could only do a role outside of the home, and I'm being shielded this wouldn't be possible. As soon as I found that you could do a role from home, I applied and was accepted as a 'Check In and Chat' volunteer. I hope that I can help others who may be feeling lonely

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- Work has really helped by keeping structure to my week. Helping others through these tough times, getting food parcels out to clients and also giving support to my family and friends
- Baking has been great, never been into it before, cheese straws have been a favourite!
- I always love walking and recently going a little bit further and discovering new places to visit during my hour's exercise.
- At last I'm actually getting long awaited jobs completed around the house and garden, also drawing and being creative.
- Although I am self-isolating there have been joys along with the sadness of separation and absence of physical contact. Learning a number of new technological skills has been a challenge but also a way to 'meet' up with friends, family and work colleagues. Work - rest - play!!
- The garden has been a special way to experiment and make do, and then there is the joy of the resident blackbird who sings very loudly each evening!! Not an easy, uncertain time but taking life, in faith, a day at a time helps to calm the natural anxieties.
- Our MYB meetings are via WhatsApp video call – and we decided from the first meet, that we MUST wear a hat! Of course, the first 5 minutes of every meeting, starts with us all exclaiming at each other's funny looks! We are combining work with a bit of fun, and those moments of laughter really lift the spirit!



Picture right: Not the most flattering picture of any of us, but a sneaky screen print of this week's Monday morning MYB meeting. It was early, no make-up, lots of excuses, but it's good to laugh at ourselves! Harriet, top left, dressed by her number one son with her lovely ski bobble hat – Judy sporting her rather fetching curly blonde wig – and Donna donning her Transplant Team GB fancy dress bucket hat.



APPS

Apps can help to combat loneliness and many offer a forum to speak to other people who are in the same situation. Some apps are free and others may come with a charge (check before committing). If you are asked to provide personal details, please ensure that you check that the app is secure.

NOTE: Minding Your Business (MYB) & ESRA have no control over the content, level of support, privacy or stability of these apps. Please fully research the apps most relevant to you, and do not commit unless you are totally aware and understand what you are agreeing to.

- **Colour Switch** www.colorsswitch.co
"An absorbing obstacle-based game requiring time and patience to succeed, it just may offer a much-needed distraction when you're feeling lonely because it can be so compelling." For Iphone and Ipad only.
- **Happify** www.happify.com
Set up to "overcome negative thoughts, stress and life's challenges!"
- **Lyf – You're not alone**
"Whatever you're dealing with, there are others who can relate – people who would cheer you on if they could hear you. That's what Lyf is for: a platform to share stuff that might be too personal for your other social media, without the fear of judgement."
- **Panion** www.panion.com
Not a dating app, but a place to meet like-minded people with similar interests
- **Quarantine Chat** www.quarantinechat.com
Set up to support loneliness during the coronavirus lockdown
Talk to someone else stuck at home – Works on the iOS & Android app dialup
- **Replika** www.replika.ai
Using AI companions to talk to
- **Sad Lonely Painful & Hurt Love**
"is an inspirational collection of Feeling Lonely Quotes about Sadness, Feelings, feeling Hurt after Losing A Friend and you Feel Lonely Sad after love break up"
- **TalkLife** www.talklife.co
Lonely, Stressed or Battling Anxiety?

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.bearpty.talklife>

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/talklife-depression-anxiety/id449804588>



ARTICLES & WEBSITES

Campaign to End Loneliness

Connections in Older Age

www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/about-the-campaign

The Great Get Together

Inspired by Jo Cox.

Whilst The Great Get Together 2020 has been postponed, a cause worth being aware of, and maybe support in the future.

www.greatgettogether.org

Ben

www.ben.org.uk

Support, tips and advice for total health & wellbeing for the automotive industry

The Mix

Help with loneliness for the under 25-year olds

www.themix.org.uk

Frazzled Café

Now having virtual group meetings – investigate and join in!

www.frazzledcafe.org

Marmalade Trust

www.marmaladetrust.org

The Marmalade Trust is a charity dedicated to recognising loneliness across society and helping people to make new friendships

Articles

www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/blog/coronavirus-and-social-isolation

www.uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-loneliness-apps/smartphone-mindfulness-app-may-help-curb-loneliness idUKKCN1QW2VA

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/loneliness/about-loneliness

www.nytimes.com/2020/04/20/smarter-living/how-to-manage-your-loneliness.html

www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/feeling-lonely/

www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/click-here-happiness/201902/feeling-lonely-discover-18-ways-overcome-loneliness

www.letstalkloneliness.co.uk/advice

www.commonwealthfund.org/blog/2020/how-covid-19-pandemic-could-increase-social-isolation-and-how-providers-and-policymakers

www.verywellmind.com/how-to-cope-with-loneliness-during-coronavirus-4799661

www.shape.com/lifestyle/mind-and-body/how-to-deal-loneliness-self-isolation-coronavirus

Remember that life will not always be as it is now.



POEM

To Finish, this beautiful poem called "**Search for the colour**" was written (and painted) by friend, **Daphne Clement**.

It was published in @SunburyLife last week.

We think it compliments this week's topic, beautifully.

Thank you Daphne, for letting us feature your poem in our newsletter!

