



Addressing Loneliness through Social Connections Handout

We will explore how you as caregivers may lose sight of yourselves and how you may lose focus on what is happening inside you. We will discuss how losing your focus on yourself results in losing touch with the vital connections that keep you resilient and strong.

How you may lose sight of yourself

- Are you running from one demand to the next?
- Racing to keep up with all the strains on your time and energy?
- Have you been emotionally drained from caring for others, your home and keeping up with bills?
- Trying to meet work expectations?

Caregivers in particular, are at risk of being depleted by the demands of caregiving. Focusing attention on others, often at the exclusion of focusing on yourself, can place you at higher risk of medical and emotional burnout and illness. Truly it's no wonder that you have neglected your own needs when you are so focused on reacting to the demands coming at you, and so focused on attending to others.

How to bring your attention back to yourself

- Slow down
- Refocus your attention
- Explore all the many ways you can reconnect to the people, places, and activities that support your health, restore your energy, and bring some joy back into your day

How you might reconnect every day

The many connections that we maintain keeps us all resilient and engaged in living.



- You can make social connections in all kinds of ways
 - Greet someone as you pass them
 - Write a letter
 - Make a phone call
 - Sit in a coffee shop and look at others sharing friendly word or recognizing eye contact can help you to feel connected and less alone.

Social connection is defined as the feeling that you belong to a group and generally feel close to other people as humans, we are profoundly social beings. Our drive to connect with others is embedded in our biology and evolutionary history beginning at birth.

Now that we have explored what social connection is, what is social disconnection? In order to explore social disconnection, we must look at loneliness and social isolation. Loneliness is a subjective feeling. It is based on how we perceive our attachments and connections to others. When we feel lonely, we often experience an internal state of distress. It can be hard for others around us to recognize when we are lonely because it is a feeling that we experience inside ourselves. It is the emotional experience of feeling alone.

Social isolation on the other hand, is objective. This is when we are lacking social relationships and the ability to form these relationships. Social isolation is when we are physically separated from other. As Caregivers, you are highly prone to experiencing social isolation. It is important to keep in mind that both lend to one another. Social isolation can lead to loneliness and loneliness can lead to social isolation, both resulting in social disconnection.

What are some factors that can contribute to someone's risk of loneliness.

- Living alone
- Inability to leave the home (being homebound)
- Major life changes
- Grief



- Financial struggles
- Caregiving
- Limited social supports
- Mental or emotional health challenges

Ways to increase social connection

- Practicing self-awareness can help us to reconnect with ourselves by identifying our values and purpose
- Self-compassion treat yourself with kindness and compassion
- Remind yourself what matters and how you matter to others
- Having a ritual example setting up a weekly call with a friend or once a week sit in your favorite chair and read a book.
- Share words of appreciation
- Seek support in your community neighborhood, schools, places of worship, workplaces, parks, or recreation centers.
- Seek support from your local Caregiver Support Program

We hope that you consider bringing your attention back each day, many times a day, to the vital connections that are at your fingertips. Reconnecting and connecting with yourself and others helps us to understand our values, purpose, and needs. It helps us to identify where we are on the continuum of social disconnection in the present moment. By noticing these things, we can further identify what we need for ourselves or from others. Notice these connections. Enjoy them and see how it helps build your resilience even in the most challenging times!