



## Loneliness and the Importance of Connection

There is a loneliness epidemic, especially in this digital work, where many have lost the ability to socialize and have focused on connecting mainly through technology. According to Psychiatry.org loneliness has been identified as a major public health concern with significant implications for physical health, mental health and well-being such as anxiety, depression, suicidal behavior, poor self-regulation, alcohol abuse, addiction, and eating disorders (Heinrick & Cullone, 2006). And according to the [Health and Human Services Department](#), feelings of loneliness and isolation can increase premature death up to 29%

Loneliness can be described as feeling little connection with other people and having a lack of truly belonging. [Megan Hays](#), Ph.D., clinical psychologist at University of Alabama Birmingham offers suggestions on how to begin to turn those feelings around such as:

### **Focus on quality time**

Wherever you are, and whoever you are with, be present in the moment, Look people in the eyes, listen to them, and be mindful. Choose not to be distracted by your phone or other

technologies when you are spending time with other people, and you will be amazed by the improvement in the quality of your conversations and relationships.

### **Keep showing up**

Create scheduled opportunities to see people on a regular basis. Try picking activities you already enjoy as a starting point, such as participating in sports, fitness, music, or groups of common interest.

### **Be intentional**

“One of the greatest misconceptions about friendship in adulthood is that it should happen organically, but making friends in adulthood is quite different from how it was as kids,” says Dr. Hays. “The truth is that friendships almost always happen very gradually as a result of regular time spent together and continued effort.”

Hays recommends prioritizing social connections by scheduling at least one social hour per week or every other week. Another strategy is to reconnect with old friends for coffee or a simple phone call.

### **Be yourself**

Authenticity involves being vulnerable and sharing parts of oneself with others. And while being authentic is more easily said than done, Hays says it is an essential part of developing meaningful connections with others. When you express your thoughts, feelings and needs, you create trust and closeness with others. It then opens up the door for the other person to share, and this reciprocal interaction paves the road to genuine connection.

To read the full article, click [here](#).