

The Youth Mental Health Project EMPOWERS families and communities to act with the KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS and RESOURCES they need to support the SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, MENTAL, and BEHAVIORAL health of youth.



# College Readiness

## LONELINESS

Going to college is likely one of the biggest transitions you have experienced in your life. It took a lot of effort to get here. It is exciting. And yet you may find yourself feeling uncomfortable or lonely, even when you are surrounded by people. This is not an unusual feeling for college students. So many things are different in this phase of your life. Perhaps you are having trouble making friends or your friends are pairing off, your studies are getting stressful, your schedule is too busy and your family seems farther away than ever.

Being lonely can mean many things:

- Not having people around you
- being isolated
- being sad
- having feelings of bleakness

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*We live in the most technologically connected age in the history of civilization, yet rates of loneliness have doubled since the 1980s.*

DR. VIVEK MURTHY, FORMER SURGEON GENERAL.

”

We all go through periods of loneliness. Triggered by changes, hurts, disappointments, life events, or loss the most important thing is to know there is help.

### **YOU ARE NOT ALONE!**

In a 2016 survey of nearly 28,000 students on 51 campuses by the American College Health Association last year, more than 60 percent said that they had “felt very lonely” in the previous 12 months. Nearly 30 percent said that they had felt that way in the previous two weeks.

we**ALL**have mental health.

## TIPS TO ALLEVIATE LONELINESS

- Understand that it happens to everyone: College students are prone to feeling this way because they're away from their homes and previous comfort zones.
- Acknowledge what you're feeling: Loneliness may be prevalent on college campuses, but it doesn't have to define your experience.
- Be proactive: The more you put yourself out there and open yourself up to new experiences, the less lonely you'll feel in the long run.



**Meet new people:** Next time you sit down for a lecture, strike up a conversation with whomever is sitting near you. Ask her about an upcoming assignment, how she thought the homework went or anything else that comes to mind. Opening up to new people helps lessen the sting of loneliness. Grabbing coffee with a new friend from class is a perfect, low-pressure way of getting to know someone further.



**Get involved:** Connect with other people. Keep your door open when you are in your room; attend school sponsored activities.



**Take advantage of what your school has to offer:** Join an extracurricular activity including clubs, sports or volunteering; find a study group.



**Recognize destructive thought patterns:** It's easy to let your emotions overwhelm you and distort your perspective. When this happens, loneliness takes a hold on your life and prevents you from being yourself. But what happens when you change your way of thinking? Instead of believing that you're truly alone, try looking at it from a different angle. Maybe your distant friends are stressed with school and that's why you haven't heard from them. Maybe there are a ton of new people out there who would love to hang out with you, but you haven't reached out to them yet. Maybe everyone else just looks like they're having more fun in their Facebook and Instagram pictures, but in reality they sometimes feel lonely, too.

## WAYS TO FIND HELP IF YOUR FEELINGS ARE NOT IMPROVING:

- Call home.
- Call the campus counseling or health center.
- Request a confidential conversation with your resident advisor if you are in a campus residence hall.
- Talk with the dean of student affairs, peer support specialist or campus chaplain.
- Request a confidential conversation with your academic advisor or a faculty member.
- Contact the leader of a campus mental health organization, such as NAMI on Campus or Active Minds.
- Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator: [findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov).

*\*TIP: In general, the most confidential place on campus is the counseling or mental health center. They can share information about you only with your agreement—unless they feel you might be an immediate danger to yourself or others.*

For more information:

The Youth Mental Health Project  
[ymhproject.org](http://ymhproject.org)

Special thank you to:

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