

# R.E.A.L Goals<sup>SM</sup>: Reduce Isolation and Loneliness

(Realistic, Easy, Attainable, Life Goals)

**Example:** I will find one new way of reducing my loneliness and isolation each week for one month.

## Background:

- Social isolation is based on the connection and relationship between people.
- Loneliness is the distressing personal feeling that can be experienced, regardless of the amount or quality of social relationships.
- Anyone can experience social isolation and loneliness; both are associated with health risks.

## Benefits of reducing social isolation:

- Reduced depressive symptoms
- Improved blood pressure
- Better sleep
- Strengthened immune system



## Things to think about:

- Are you at risk for loneliness or isolation?
  - Isolation is a risk factor for loneliness.
  - "There's no hard-and-fast rule that everyone needs to be involved with others all the time, but we tend to feel better when we're with others, and we may feel worse if we're often alone," says Dr. Michael Craig Miller, a Harvard Medical School professor of psychiatry.
- What causes isolation?
  - Risk factors include:
    - Living alone, without family support
    - Having a disability
    - Struggling with a language barrier
    - Geographical challenges—such as living in a rural area or not having transportation—that keep you from accessing benefits.

## Quick tips:

- Join online forums
  - Groups on areas of interest and social media are a good way to connect when you are not physically or emotionally able to get out and about. Be engaged; don't just scroll through, comment, and contribute to the discussion.
- Set up regular phone calls or Zoom meetings with friends, family, and neighbors. Chat and catch up, watch a live-stream concert together, or chat about a book you read.

- Join a fitness center.
  - o Fitness centers often offer social or enrichment classes in addition to the benefits of physical activity.
- Audit a class at an area college or an online university.
- Volunteer for a non-profit.
  - o Food Pantries – for info on where to find one in your area, look up FoodPantries.org.
  - o Red Cross
  - o Senior or community centers
  - o School districts or a YMCA
  - o Habitat for Humanity
- Take an enrichment course.
  - o Learn to cook something new, play an instrument, work with clay, auto mechanics, etc.
- Get a pet.
  - o If you cannot have a pet, you could volunteer at one of the Humane Societies or with a local animal rescue group. This is a great way to get your animal time in while also meeting new people.
- Go to a coffee shop, library, or bookstore to read. Ask if they know of any book clubs available that you could join.
- Visit a local or state park. Many times, the parks are looking for volunteers as well.
- Pen pals? Write a letter to someone you have talked to in a while.
- Check in with co-workers. Do a coffee chat with your team and catch up, take a meeting outside, and walk while discussing agenda items.
- Try a new hobby and meet people with similar interests.

### Check out these links to learn more:

TedTalks - [How to Get Rid of Loneliness and Become Happy](#)

Psychology Today - [10 Things to Do When You Feel Lonely](#)

Download the Meetup and Nextdoor apps

**Explore more [Real Goals and Supplemental Resources](#)**

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