



BRIDGECHAT

<https://www.acc.af.mil/About-Us/The-Bridge/>

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Bridge Chat Overview and Importance

The societal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is broad and very challenging. No aspect of normal societal functioning has been spared. Quarantine and social distancing were necessary measures to prevent the virus from spreading but also led to elevated levels of loneliness and social isolation, which in turn produced physical- and mental-health related repercussions.

Those who find themselves unexpectedly isolated due to illness, separation from friends or family, disability, access to transportation, are at particular risk of loneliness and social isolation. Losing a sense of connection and community can change the way a person sees the world. If you find yourself craving human interaction but also feel like you're having a hard time bonding with others, you may be lonely. Loneliness means more than being alone—you can be in a room full of people and still feel lonely.

Everyone needs social connections to survive and thrive. It's also important to stay active and connect with others. People who engage in meaningful, productive activities they enjoy with others feel a sense of purpose and tend to live longer. Studies show these activities may help boost your mood and improve your well-being and cognitive function.

Tips for preventing the detrimental effect of loneliness and social isolation:

- Keep connections with friends and family
- Stay physically active
- Eat healthy
- Get enough sleep (7-9 hours)
- Engage in activities you enjoy
- Stay socially active
- Maintain spiritual well-being
- Seek help early when possible, formal or informal

The following support resources are available to help:

The Bridge <https://www.acc.af.mil/About-Us/The-Bridge>
Military OneSource <https://www.militaryonesource.mil>
Employee Assistance Program <https://www.afpc.af.mil/eap>
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Veterans Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1
VeteransCrisisLine.net or text to 838255

Connect to Protect

Bridge Chat Purpose: Create cohesive, high-performing teams that foster trust and connection through flexible and consistent small group discussions; in direct response to overwhelming feedback from the CSAF 21's Resilience Tactical Pause.

Getting the Conversation Started

VIDEO: Watch "You are not alone"

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/815722/you-not-alone> (1:28)

Watch "Loneliness Explained"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVSRZpiSN-U> (1:05)

Related Resources

Molecular Geneticist, Robin Joy Meyers, shares her own journey from isolation and hiding, to trusting who she is in the world and speaking out about what's possible by using science. She reminds us that we are enough and that by relying on the science of neuroplasticity, we can change our habits and create the life we are meant to live.

Robin Joy Meyers: The Science of Loneliness and Isolation (7:18)

"High performing teams remind members that they're relevant and valued. We need to spend more time with face look and less on Facebook. When life throws a curve ball, let's be there to remind each other: 'There are better days ahead. Our team is stronger and the world more interesting with you in it.'"

– COMACC, General Mark Kelly

Suggested Discussion Questions ►

1. What is the difference between being alone and being lonely?
2. Are there times in life when we may be more likely to experience loneliness?
3. How does technology and diversity affect social isolation?
4. When can having healthy alone time turn into a warning sign to seek help for mental health?
5. How does someone combat loneliness if they don't have many friends, and if family relationships are a trigger for their mental health?
6. Are there any specific strategies for addressing loneliness when many of the usual strategies, like engaging in activities and spending time with loved ones, are not available to, or safe for, us?
7. What things can you do to help protect yourself or a loved one from the negative effects of loneliness and social isolation?
8. What do you do to really get to know your teammates as individuals?
9. How can we combat feelings of loneliness to have a more fulfilled life?

"(We have) an opportunity to reflect on the culture we need, where airmen understand their responsibilities as both leaders and wingmen. A culture where respect, trust, accountability, and compassion guide our actions."

– CMSAF, Chief JoAnne S. Bass



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