

lonely **NOT** **ALONE**

One Small Step: **Story-Sharing** Session Plans for
Youth Workers and Creative Leaders

Lonely Not Alone is a Co-op Foundation campaign created in partnership with young people and specialist co-design agency, Effervescent. Thank you to our partners for your continued support.



www.lonelynotalone.org

Contents

An Introduction to Lonely Not Alone

One Small Step 2021

Who this pack is for

Why this work is important

Before you start

Who these sessions are for

If you need some help or advice

Option 1 - single session workshop plan

Option 2 - two session workshop plan

Feedback

Lonely Not Alone: Helpful Resources

Appendix 2: Maps and journeys

Appendix 3: Memes, quotes and images about loneliness

Page 3

Page 4 - 5

Page 6

Page 7

Page 8 -9

Page 10

Page 11

Page 12 - 18

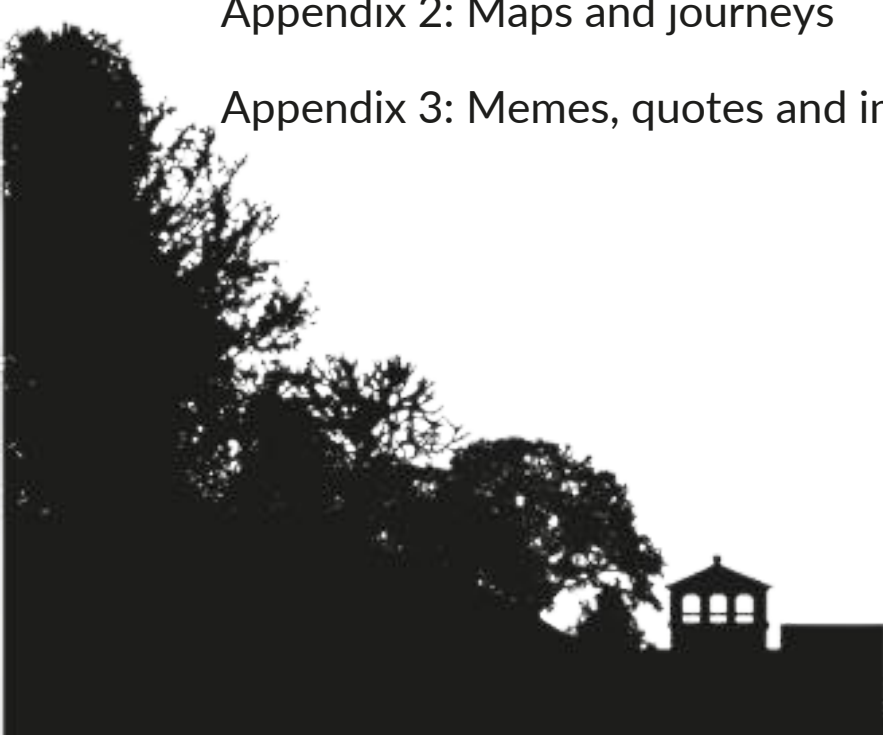
Page 19 - 30

Page 31

Page 32

Page 33

Page 34



An introduction to Lonely Not Alone



Foundation

Words by Nick Crofts, Co-op Foundation CEO

The Co-op Foundation's Lonely Not Alone campaign is made by young people, for young people, to tackle the stigma of youth loneliness.

Stigma is a significant issue: research shows that only about a third of young people (37%) feel confident talking about loneliness while just half (53%) believe it's a normal emotion for people their age. Young people say a fear of other people's reactions stops them talking about loneliness. We want to tackle this so young people can grow up with the confidence, skills, relationships and positive mental wellbeing they need to contribute to their community.

Working in partnership with creative co-design agency, Effervescent, we've engaged young people with different experiences of loneliness to develop campaigns that help their peers. Our co-designers came up with the idea of wearing yellow socks as a symbol of solidarity with young people who are lonely. Over the past two years, thousands of people have got involved including individuals, youth groups, universities, ministers and even the prime minister. In 2020, research showed 20% of young people in the UK had seen Lonely Not Alone.

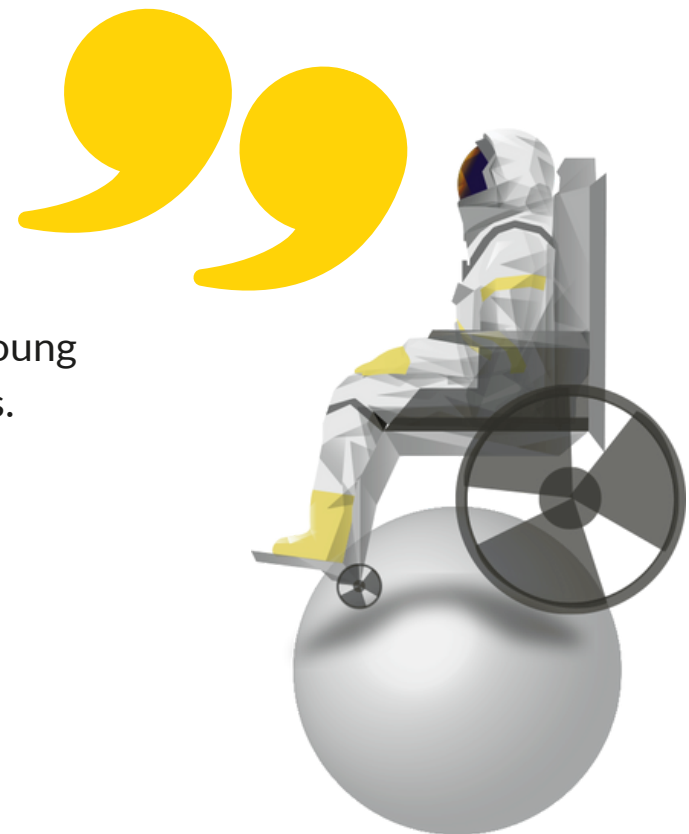
What we're trying to achieve

Stigma is hard to measure. In 2021, we're aiming to:

- Increase the number of young people who believe loneliness is a normal emotion for their age
- Help more young people feel confident talking about loneliness
- Help more young people recognise the loneliness is taken seriously by society
- Help more young people take actions to tackle loneliness in themselves and others

A campaign by young people, for young people

We believe young people are the experts in tackling issues that affect them. Over the past two and a half years, we've worked directly with around 90 young people, supporting them as volunteers and as commissioned creatives to use their own lived experiences of loneliness to help themselves and their peers.





The universe goes on forever. Loneliness doesn't have to.

This year we're inviting young people into a digital universe filled with authentic stories from children, teenagers and young adults who have experienced loneliness, and perhaps discovered the One Small Step that has helped to make things better for them.

When a young person anonymously shares their story on the website, they become a star in the night sky, and part of a constellation of other stars who have similar experiences of loneliness. The universe is home to ten constellations. The Hedgehog constellation is full of people who are hurting, but don't let anyone get near enough to help. Urban Foxes have been moved from place to place and feel like outsiders. Unicorn constellation is made up of talented people who just don't seem to fit in with those around them.

Once young people have found their constellation and providing they are 13 or older, they will be invited to connect with other young people in their constellation in a moderated and safe environment using the Discord app (if they wish to). Our aim here is to widen young people's supportive network of people who have similar experiences and can share ideas on how to take steps to deal with loneliness.



This universe is real

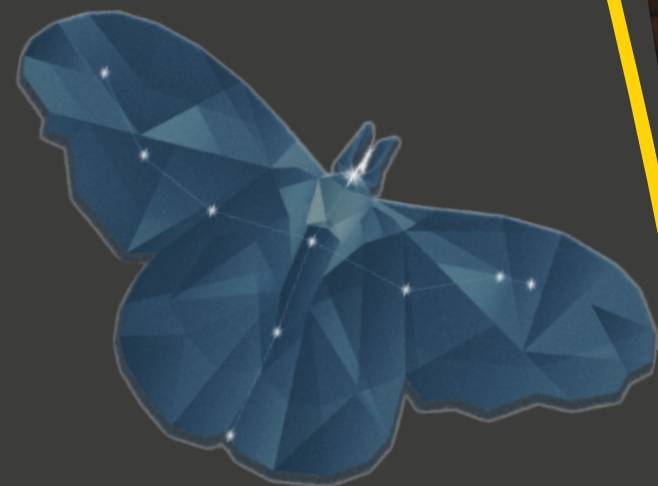
Each Lonely Not Alone constellation has been mapped to a real constellation, so young people can look up at the night sky from their bedroom window or back garden and see their star up there, shining bright. In our universe the constellation known as Pegasus is made up of trailblazing Unicorns, whilst Perseus is reimagined as the brave Polar Bears. So when young people feel lonely, they can look up into the sky and know that they're not alone; they'll know that although the universe goes on forever, loneliness doesn't have to.



**Please visit
www.lonelynotalone.org
for more information
about how we safeguard
the wellbeing of
everyone who submits a
story, and protect their
personal details**



Further advice and resources can be found at the **Tackling Youth Loneliness** website funded by the Co-op Foundation
tacklingyouthloneliness.org.uk



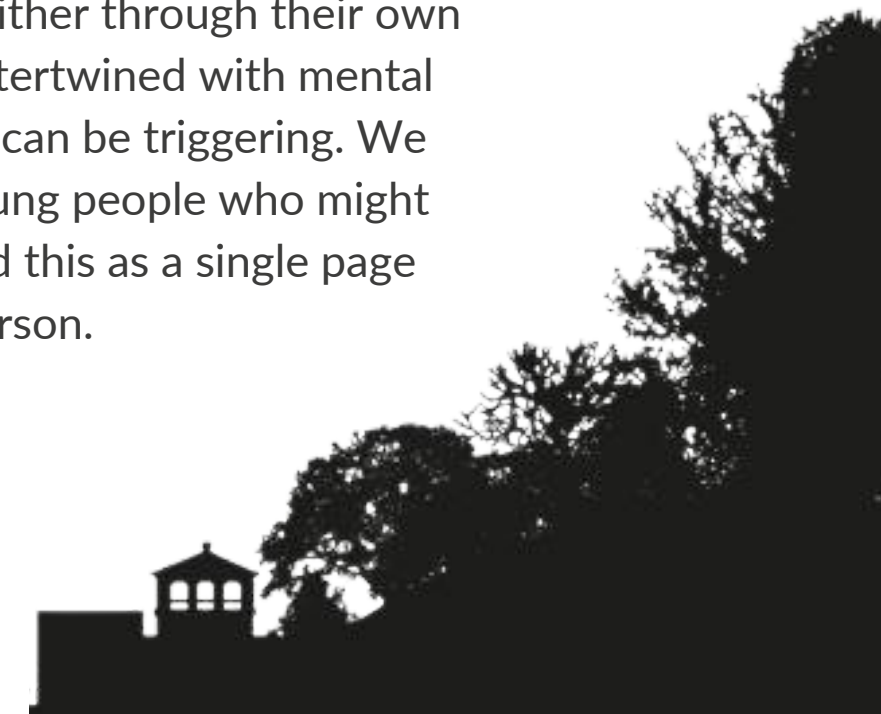
Who this pack is for

This pack is for youth workers, youth leaders, creative arts leaders and teachers that want to support young people to talk about loneliness together, to tell their stories, and to share them with others – especially those who don't belong to a youth group, or who might be more comfortable telling their story in an anonymous digital universe.

As a session leader you should have a thorough understanding into the causes and consequences of young people's loneliness before you support young people to share their stories.

This pack is a guide – you can adapt it to suit the young people in your session, your own expertise and the space and session length you're working within. What's crucial, though, is to create a safe space where young people engage because they want to, and to ensure you have strategies in place afterwards for anyone who needs more time to talk.

For any discussion with young people about loneliness and isolation, workers should know what support is available to young people, either through their own organisations or from specialist provision. Loneliness is intertwined with mental wellbeing, and discussion around such a sensitive subject can be triggering. We have included in the appendices a list of resources for young people who might need specialist support after the session – we've designed this as a single page document that can be copied and given to each young person.



Why this work is important

Loneliness and isolation can be difficult and sensitive subjects; and they can feel overwhelming at times. In recent years, as youth workers and co-design specialists, Effervescent and Youth Work: North East have both begun to develop approaches that can help young people to explore the issues, to start taking positive steps in their own lives, and to build the confidence and motivation to help others. Perhaps one of the most challenging aspects of youth loneliness is one of the things that can make the biggest positive difference – young people feeling they are able to tell their own stories about loneliness and isolation.

Being lonely is something that many young people feel embarrassed about – being able to tell your own story, on your own terms, can be a hugely positive step. It enables people to develop their voice, to begin to understand and take some control of their experiences and emotions, and to develop confidence and improve their self-esteem.

As well as helping their own wellbeing, a young person telling their story can have a positive impact on others; often young people they have never met and will never meet. One of the perverse aspects of feeling lonely is that the vast majority of young people feel they are the only one that feels the way they do – that they do not fit in, that there is something wrong with them, that no one else understands them.

“81% of young people cite the fear of people’s reactions as a barrier to talking about loneliness” (Co-op Foundation report, 2017)

Telling stories is one way of connecting people, of helping young people realise that there are others who feel the same way. Whether it is a story of overcoming an aspect of loneliness or simply one of the struggles they face, sharing experiences can be the first positive step many young people can take in beginning to tackle the issue.

Sharing stories also has positive influence across the wider public, where youth loneliness is a much misunderstood issue, and common mis-assumptions still prevail, e.g. young people are not really lonely – they have lots of people around them at school, college or university, it only happens to the elderly or it is just a state of mind.

Thank you for working on this with us; this one small step can be a giant leap for young people who feel alone.

81%

of young people say the fear of people’s reactions is a barrier to talking about loneliness





You can get free yellow socks* for everyone in your group by sending an email to foundation.media@coop.co.uk, with your name, the number of socks you would like and a delivery address.



Before you start

Resources you should prepare

We suggest you prepare a pair of yellow socks for each young person, with a copy of the resource sheet from the appendix, in a yellow envelope and tied together with some string, wool or ribbon.

You'll also need

- A small notebook for each participant, OR some good quality paper
- Wool/staples/craft supplies to make into a tiny notebook in the session
- Pens and pencils for the group to share
- Crayons, coloured pencils, or oil pastels
- Wifi, for young people to use their own devices to access the Lonely Not Alone website OR wifi-enable devices if young people don't have their own device
- Flipchart paper and blue tack or masking tape

Young people can visit the URL below to submit their story. They'll be asked to give their age and an email address, so we can send them a welcome message and resources for more support. No other information will be requested. If you'd like more information about how we keep young people safe, please visit

<https://lonelynotalone.org/privacy-notice>

lonelynotalone.org

*We will send socks on a first-come, first-served basis whilst supplies last. We estimate that the socks will arrive around 10 days after you request them, so please bear that in mind with your session planning.

Before you start

The right space

We suggest:

- A space where young people feel safe and respected
 - Neutrally decorated (ideally without lots of pictures, posters, or graffiti on the wall) to aid focus
 - Movable comfortable seating, such as cushions and bean bags, rather than desks and chairs
 - A room that is unlikely to have on-lookers, casual droppers-in, people listening in or peeking through the window
 - Wherever possible, set up a 'green room' or 'time out' space that's slightly apart and slightly out of eye-line for anyone opting to take a moment (nobody wants to be looked at when they are feeling anxious, but be sure safeguarding procedures are still in place and they don't end up isolated.)
- If we have time we often create this space with the young people: some sheer bits of fabric, fairy lights, and an old sofa or some beanbags is a popular approach.



“What drew me to it was helping others. I do really value helping other people. I find something very rewarding with helping others. I find that loneliness is something that isn’t mentioned much.”

Alima, 19





"It was exciting to meet new people who cared about the cause too. When you're working as a team, towards a common goal, you can really get to know people and that's really beautiful."

Claire, 16



Who these sessions are for

The young people who will most benefit from the sessions

These sessions are for young people who have experienced loneliness and are ready to talk about that. You can reassure them that nobody will be put on the spot or asked to do anything they don't want to.

The sessions are not for young people who haven't experienced loneliness themselves - allies

Allies can be directed to the website to read the stories and to support the campaign by making a positive or empathetic comment on social media, for example, to help other young people find the site and share their stories. They might also express the One Small Step they now know they can do, or intend to do, to be helpful to young people experiencing loneliness.

Development/learning objectives include:

- Feel less isolated in their experiences
- Develop positive trusting relationships with other people and offer support to them
- Believe they have someone they can talk to
- Create some poetry, prose or lyrics; record spoken words, or a capella song, on the Lonely Not Alone website – a form of social action that helps break down stigma
- Understand that sharing their story on the Lonely Not Alone website will support other young people across the country, who don't have a youth group to talk to

How we hope the sessions will benefit young people

The aim of these sessions is to help young people realise that even if they are lonely, they're not alone, and that talking about loneliness can be a big relief and the start of a way forward.

If you need some help or advice

If you need general youth work advice or safeguarding advice for these sessions, you can contact – your local authority (while not all have youth services, they will be able to give advice and support). You can also contact your local CVS - community, voluntary service. For safeguarding advice, you should contact your local safeguarding children's board.

If you are looking for creative support with these sessions, please contact Effeverscent - richard@eff.org.uk

Ready To Start?

These sessions can be delivered either as a one-session experience, or a two-session experience.





**Option 1 -
single session
workshop
plan**

Single session workshop plan

This session is designed for 7 – 15 people.

Not all activities will fit into the timings; you can choose which you prefer and there are some extras if you feel the chemistry of the group needs more than one activity in each section. All session support workers should join in with every activity and be 'with' the group - rather than an adult supervising the group.

Timings	Activities	Resources	Notes
Introduction 5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remind everyone about the purpose of the session, and the topic being explored• Reassure everyone that loneliness is something that everyone here has experienced, and that everyone has come to talk about it, even if that might feel tough at first• Outline the session – what we will be doing and in what order (in general terms, but if anyone in your group is neurodiverse, they may appreciate seeing the plan written/drawn on the wall on post it notes, for example)		At this point we would also invite everyone to take off their shoes and put the yellow socks on for the session. We at Effervescent have a theory that people think better and are more comfy sitting on cushions or bean bags when their feet aren't in hard shoes, but not everyone likes to do this – the choice is yours!





Timings

Activities

Resources

Notes

Warm up
10 minutes

- Love + Hate. Ask someone to say their name, say something they absolutely adore and something they can't stand. Write down what they say on a flipchart. At the end, attach the flipchart paper to the wall.
- Name + Action. Ask everyone to stand in a circle. Invite the first person to say their name and do a movement. Everyone in the circle says their name back to them, and copies their movement. Go around the circle: the person who went first can decide whether clockwise or anticlockwise.
- Fruit Salad. Invite everyone to sit on a chair in a circle. One person stands in the centre. The person standing makes a statement that's true for them (I'm wearing clean socks, my parents drive me crazy, I hide it but I'm really shy) and then anyone for whom that statement is also true, has to swap chairs whilst the person standing tries to sit. The person in the centre then has their turn. If the person in the centre can't think of a statement they can say Fruit Salad and everyone has to swap chairs. Give up when you think everyone is warmed up. Get rid of the chairs and sit in a circle on cushions/floor.

Flipchart paper + pens

The ice breakers are to help the group find out something about each other, and to immediately feel supported, listened to, like their presence is important.

Choose one, two, or all three depending on how you feel the group is jelling

The love and hate game gets everyone speaking on their territory/expertise. It also creates some links as people realise they have shared passions or horrors (spiders, baked beans, little sisters, fluffy animals...)

The name and action game helps spontaneity, creates group trust that everyone will back them up, and gets everyone saying something early on in the session.

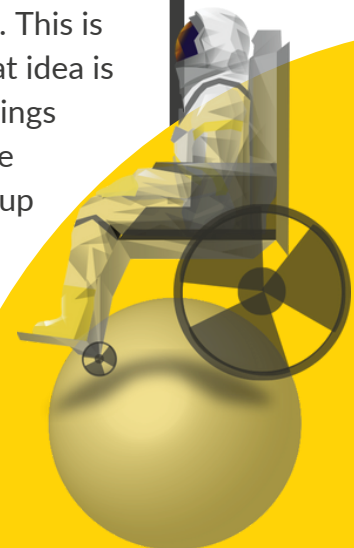
Fruit salad encourages spontaneity, mischief, and gets people used to sharing embarrassing truths without anyone dwelling on it, and immediately seeing other people might be/feel the same.

Promises
15 minutes

- Remind everyone **again** about the subject matter, and then split them into small groups of 2 - 4 people (depends on group size - you want 2 - 4 little groups in total)
- Ask each mini-group, "what promises do you think we need to make to each other, to ensure this group stays a safe place for everyone to talk about loneliness, and their experiences?"
- Bring the groups together again in a circle after about 5 minutes or whenever you judge everyone is ready. Ask each group to offer a promise (one at a time) and then, when they've expressed it, ask the whole group if they can promise to do/be that. If yes, write it down. If not, negotiate until everyone feels ok, then write it down.
- Continue this process until every statement that's needed is on the flipchart. Some statements might need editing as you go.
- At the end, stick the flipchart to the wall.

Flipchart + pens

The use of the word "promises" here is deliberate, and pulls on neurolinguistic programming. You want everyone to agree how they **will** behave, rather than what they **won't** do. If ideas are expressed as, 'no doing this or that' ask the group to suggest a positive way to express that, they everyone can get behind. This is because, if you introduce things that people mustn't do, that idea is now present in the group. If you stick to and write down things people "will" do, that positive message stays attached to the flipchart and continues to influence the subconsciously group throughout the session.



Timings

Starting the Conversation

15 minutes

Activities

- Blue tack the 'memes' and images from the resources section, on the walls.
- Ask everyone to walk around the room and look at all these images and quotes and memes. Ask everyone to choose one that speaks to them or they find interesting, and bring it back to the circle.
- Invite everyone to sit in a circle on cushions.
- Ask the first person to introduce the image they chose, and what it was that they find so truthful, interesting, startling, or relevant about that image.
- Whoever started by introducing their image gets to say whether they're passing it clockwise or anticlockwise around the circle. Everyone should have the opportunity to speak, including the session leaders, which should speak about their own experiences with thoughtfulness about what and how much to share to benefit the group.
- Make notes about what everyone says on the flipchart paper, and add the flipchart paper to the wall at the end of this exercise, with the images and quotes around it.

Resources

Appendix 3

Flipchart and pens

Blue tack

Notes

Notes on taking notes: in order to create an environment (or milieu) of safety, attentiveness and openness, it's very important to attempt to write down what young people say verbatim. By that, it doesn't mean you have to capture every single word, but you should try to capture as much as possible, and in their own words. It's not helpful to translate this – the most helpful thing is to write what young people say exactly as they say it.

"LNA has given me the hope of doing something positive, meeting new people who I immediately felt a connection with, and creating something incredible. It's the first piece of excitement and happiness in a long while, and I found myself so inspired by everyone and everything we were doing. "

Josie, 20



Timings

Exploration
30 minutes

Activities

- In a safe and supportive manner ask the group if they are comfortable sharing their experiences of being lonely – offer that we can either discuss, or we could do a creative activity to help everyone get there, but the group has to decide. Get the group to decide.
- If they want to chat in a group, just let that happen and nurture it. OR
- Introduce the idea of maps. Maps show routes for journeys, how to get from one place to another. Some maps are very clear, and some are ore maps of territories and terrains and you have to find your own way through. It might not always be obvious where you are going.
- Now we're going to map our own journeys of loneliness in our books or on flipchart paper or snazzy paper. You can do it however you want - as a map of a real or imaginary, as a flow diagram, as a timeline, however you like. It can be as real-life or as magical as you like. Give everyone plenty of time, and we often find background music helps people feel more comfortable.
- Ask someone to introduce what they've drawn, and what it means to them. Ask them to pass their book around the circle, and everyone to say what is it in this image that seems really truthful, or strikes a chord for them, or they can relate to (you are *not* asking them to critique the image or judge the quality – if anyone goes down that path, gently remind them we're looking at the metaphor as the important thing)
- When the book gets around to the starting person, they get to say a final thing about how everyone reacted to their image. Then move on to the next person in the circle and start the process again. If you unsure if everyone wants to share, you could – instead – ask for someone to offer to share theirs next, but you must ensure everyone comments on whatever is shared.
- Capture all the commentary on flip charts and stick them to the wall.

Resources

Maps in appendices, and on the online resource

Flip charts

Pens

Snazzy paper

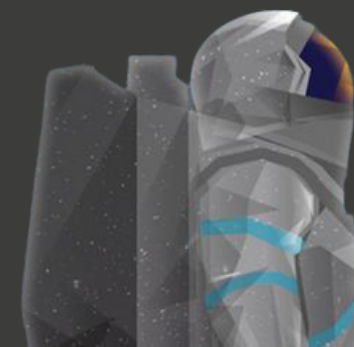
Crayons and oil pastels

Craft supplies

Notes

Background music. So, as with the idea of a neutral space with no posters on the wall, music for crafting or drawing our experiences should be non-lyrics based, and preferably reasonably unfamiliar to the group. You're using it to create a safe space and a mood, and to ensure the silence whilst people draw isn't awkward.

Creative activity: this is probably obvious but all the sessional workers should join in this activity and draw their experiences. You're trying to avoid them and us situations.



"When we were brainstorming often our ideas went down a path I had never even considered, but they turned out to be really important ideas and often resonated with a lot of our experiences of loneliness within the group."



Timings

Wind down
15 minutes


Activities

- Circle time again: remind everyone we have come to the end of this session, but that Lonely Not Alone is an ongoing project. Once they have submitted their story they will be invited to join a constellation of other young people in the night sky, and that they will also be invited to join a Discord group if they are aged between 13 and 25. They can go back to read other stories, and the constellation they join is really visible in the night sky so they will be able to see themselves as stars in the real universe once they have their star name.
- Ask everyone around the circle to talk about one thing that's been really good for them over the two sessions, and one small step they're going to take for themselves and their wellbeing in the week ahead – whether to do with loneliness, or something else.
- Remind everyone that if they need any support or extra talking time, what's available from your setting, and that they also have resources on the paper you gave them.

Resources

Notes





**Option 2 -
two session
workshop
plan**

two session workshop plan

This session is designed for 7 – 15 people.

Not all activities will fit into the timings; you can choose which you prefer and there are some extras if you feel the chemistry of the group needs more than one activity in each section. All session support workers should join in with every activity and be 'with' the group - rather than an adult supervising the group.

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81%

of young people say a fear of other people's reactions stops them talking about loneliness



Timings

Warm ups
10 minutes

Activities

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Resources

Notes

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The love and hate game gets everyone speaking on their territory/expertise. It also creates some links as people realise they have shared passions or horrors (spiders, baked beans, little sisters, fluffy animals...)

The name and action game helps spontaneity, creates group trust that everyone will back them up, and gets everyone saying something early on in the session.

Fruit salad encourages spontaneity, mischief, and gets people used to sharing embarrassing truths without anyone dwelling on it, and immediately seeing other people might be/feel the same.

"Just starting a conversation is something really powerful I think, if we can get more people of all ages talking about youth loneliness, loneliness in young people I feel like that's something that could really benefit all of us."

Harry, 22



Timings

Promises
15 minutes

Activities

- Remind everyone *again* about the subject matter, and then split them into small groups of 2 – 4 people (depends on group size – you want 2 – 4 little groups in total)
- Ask each mini-group, “what promises do you think we need to make to each other, to ensure this group stays a safe place for everyone to talk about loneliness, and their experiences?”
- Bring the groups together again in a circle after about 5 – 10 minutes or whenever you judge everyone is ready. Ask each group to offer a promise (one at a time) and then, when they’ve expressed it, ask the whole group if they can promise to do/be that. If yes, write it down. If not, negotiate until everyone feels ok, then write it down.
- Continue this process until every statement that’s needed is on the flipchart. Some statements might need editing as you go.
- At the end, stick the flipchart to the wall.

Resources

Flipchart paper
Pens

Notes

The use of the word “promises’ here is deliberate, and pulls on neurolinguistic programming. You want everyone to agree how they *will* behave, rather than what they *won’t* do. If ideas are expressed as, ‘no doing this or that’ ask the group to suggest a positive way to express that, they everyone can get behind. This is because, if you introduce things that people mustn’t do, that idea is now present in the group. If you stick to and write down things people “will” do, that positive message stays attached to the flipchart and continues to influence the subconsciously group throughout the session.

Starting the Conversation
15 minutes



- Blue tack the ‘memes’ and images from the resources section, on the walls.
- Ask everyone to walk around the room and look at all these images and quotes and memes. Ask everyone to choose one that speaks to them or they find interesting, and bring it back to the circle.
- Invite everyone to sit in a circle on cushions.
- Ask the first person to introduce the image they chose, and what it was that they find so truthful, interesting, startling, or relevant about that image.
- Whoever started by introducing their image gets to say whether they’re passing it clockwise or anticlockwise around the circle. Everyone should have the opportunity to speak, including the session leaders, which should speak about their own experiences with thoughtfulness about what and how much to share to benefit the group.
- Make notes about what everyone says on the flipchart paper, and add the flipchart paper to the wall at the end of this exercise, with the images and quotes around it.

Appendix 3

Loneliness memes printed out on to paper

Flipchart and pens

Blue tack

Notes on taking notes: in order to create an environment (or milieu) of safety, attentiveness and openness, it’s very important to attempt to write down what young people say verbatim. By that, it doesn’t mean you have to capture every single word, but you should try to capture as much as possible, and in their own words. It’s not helpful to translate this – the most helpful thing is to write what young people say exactly as they say it.

Timings

Reflection + building groups' ideas

25-30 minutes

Activities

- Invite everyone to sit in a circle on cushions. Resources in the centre.
- Give out your notebooks, or snazzy paper.
- If snazzy paper, ask everyone to use stapler, wool, craft materials to make into a little book (think A5/6/7 size – just a tiny little book. You might have to show them how to do this.
- Ask everyone to make their notebook their own – name, image, decoration etc.

- Ask everyone to draw a picture, or set of picture, in their book that summarises “loneliness”: reassure them that the artistic quality isn't the crucial thing, it's to come up with an image that makes sense to them. You can invite them, if they prefer, to find somewhere out of the circle to work if they prefer

- Invite everyone back to the circle.
- Ask someone to introduce what they've drawn, and what it means to them. Ask them to pass their book around the circle, and everyone to say what that image says for them about loneliness (you are *not* asking them to critique the image or judge the quality – if anyone goes down that path, gently remind them we're looking at the metaphor as the important thing)
- When the book gets around to the starting person, they get to say a final thing about how everyone reacted to their image. Then move on to the next person in the circle and start the process again. If you unsure if everyone wants to share, you could – instead – ask for someone to offer to share theirs next, but you must ensure everyone comments on whatever is shared.

Resources

Notebooks or paper

Stapler and wool

Craft supplies

Pens + pencils

Notes

If you are more comfortable with dance or theatre, rather than working with visual imagery you might want to work with tableau here – individually or in pairs. If solo – great, crack on. If some people want pairs, gently but assertively put them in a pair/three. Don't leave anyone having to make that choice or connection for themselves or feeling like it's their job to find someone to work with. It's too early in the group process for that.

Follow the same route of asking every single person to comment on what they see and how that relates to loneliness for them, as you would in the visual example.

If anyone gets stuck – some useful questions:

- What really speaks to you about this image?
- What does it make you think about loneliness and how it is experienced?
- What do the colours say about loneliness?
- How do you feel about loneliness when you see this image?

The vague topic of “loneliness” here allows some people to dive in with their own feelings, whereas other people might want to be a bit more dispassionate at this point and talk in terms they find more comfortable. This isn't about getting anything right – it's about creating ways for people to talk about it on their terms.

Creative activity: this is probably obvious but all the sessional workers should join in this activity and draw on their experiences. You're trying to avoid 'them and us' situations.



Timings

Comfort break
10 minutes

Causes of loneliness
25-30 minutes

Activities

- We suggest tea, hot chocolate, cake, or other comforting snacks at this point.
- You might also go for a walk outside. We like Stuck in The Mud as a ridiculous game to aid team building and a sense of people helping each other.

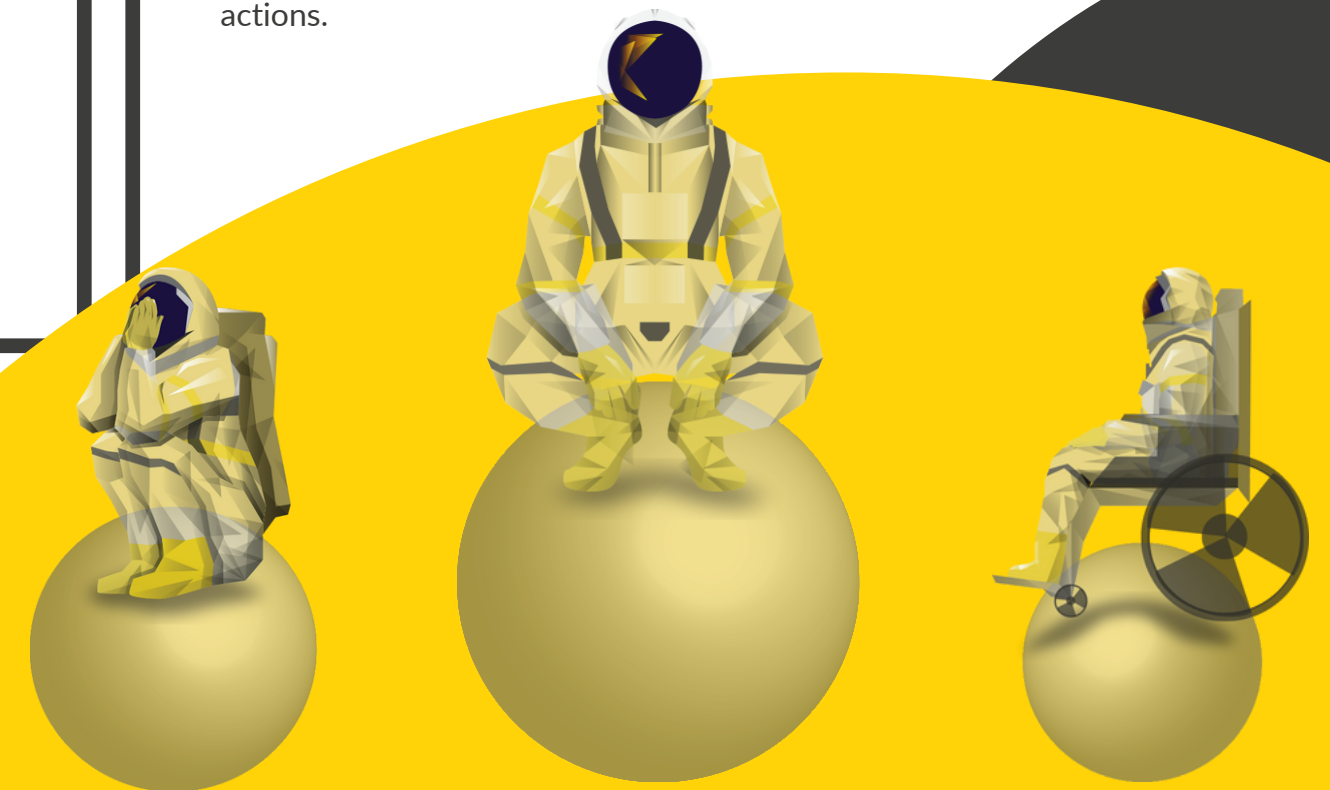
- Split the group into small (different to previous) minigroups.
- First of all, we're going to do a quick thought shower - how do people become lonely? Write down as a group things that can cause people to be lonely.
- Ask the group to look at what they're written down. How many things are factors in someone's control?
- What can we learn from this about how people become lonely?
- Capture everything on flip charts and stick to wall.

Resources

Notebooks or Paper

Notes

- Splitting the group: we have lots of ridiculous techniques to do this. One of our favourites is to have a top hat with one scrap of paper in it for each participant. On those scraps are drawings of either a dog, a cat, a bird, or some other silly animal. If you wanted to use Lonely Not Alone constellation creatures as a subtle intro to the website, we think a bird, a(fire)fly, and a crocodile would be good)
- Ask everyone to draw out a bit of paper, and keep their creature secret, then, when you say "now" ask everyone to find their group without speaking, only by making their creature's noises or actions.



Timings

Wind down
15 minutes

Activities

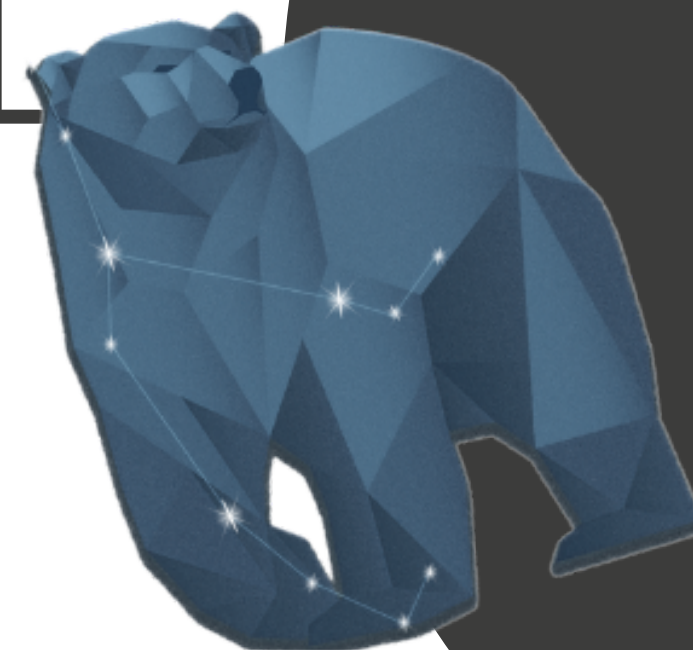
- Ask everyone to sit in a circle. Ask everyone to whip out their notebook and make a note: the person sitting to their right – what have they done that you’ve really admired or been thankful for in this session? What positive or good thing have you seen them do that has been helpful for you personally or the group? Then go around the group and each person to say these things to the person sat next to them.
- Thank everyone for their work in this session, and remind them that in the next session we will be working on stories to share on the website. We’ll also be thinking about what someone has done for us to help us already, or what we are going to do that might help ourselves or someone else. Remind them that you’re giving them socks to take home, and some resources for anyone if they need them between sessions. Signpost them to the website to read some stories if they want to think about this before the next session, but reassure them there’s no pressure.
- Remind everyone they will need their personal email address and password for the next session as the website verifies emails to keep everyone safe.
- Go around the circle the opposite way now, and ask everyone what they’ve enjoyed today, and what they’re looking forward to in the next session.
- Say goodbye, and remind everyone that you are on hand if anyone needs a chat after the session.

Resources

Notebooks

Pens

Notes



Activity Session 2: supporting young people to share their story in the Lonely Not Alone universe

It's probably obvious, but this session should be for everyone who came to the first session: no newbies, please.

Timings	Activities	Resources	Notes
<p>Introduction 5 – 10 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remind everyone about the purpose of the session, and the topic being explored• Reassure everyone that loneliness is something that everyone here has experienced, and that everyone has come to talk about it, even if that might feel tough at first• Outline the session – what we will be doing and in what order (in general terms, but if anyone in your group is neurodiverse, they may appreciate seeing the plan written/drawn on the wall on post it notes, for example)• Remind everyone of the promises from the session before – make sure they are on the wall and make sure everyone still agrees and doesn't have anything to add or renegotiate.	<p>Promises from the previous session</p>	<p>At this point we would also invite everyone to take off their shoes and put the yellow socks on for the session. We at Effervescent have a pet theory that people think better and are more comfy sitting on cushions or bean bags when their feet aren't in hard shoes, but not everyone likes to do this – the choice is yours!</p>



“It was wacky and crazy! It’s amazing. Young people are usually underestimated. The campaign wasn’t made by older people sitting in their offices, but by young people.”

Elorm, 16



Timings

Warm ups
10 minutes

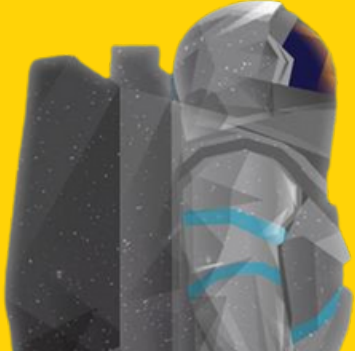
Activities

- Namename is a fun way to remind each other of names. Group stands in a circle. One person in the middle has to say someone's name three times, and that person has to interrupt them by saying their own name (once) before they've finished. If they interrupt, then the person stays in the centre. If they don't say their name in time, they have to go to the centre.
- How's your week been? If you haven't seen them for a while you might invite everyone to sit in a circle and say how their week has been. I sometimes find it interesting to ask them why they came back, or what they're looking forward to this evening. This can be a funny conversation.
- If I were an animal. How are they feeling at the moment? If they magically transformed into an animal right now, what would they be and what would that say about how they are feeling? Are they sleepy like a bush baby, or over excited like a spaniel puppy? Doesn't have to be a 'real' creature - magical creatures are also welcome.

Resources

Notes

- There's two school of thought here. You might want to do similar activities to last time to draw on comfort and familiarity, or you might fancy introducing a fresh game.
- Again, this is really just getting everyone back in the zone, reminding them that the convention of this safe space is that everyone speaks and everyone listens to them when they speak - that they can be imaginative and daft, or deep and meaningful, whatever they want it to be for them.



"I really love the group interaction. Usually when you have groupwork you feel your team are sort of interested at the start; but then just get bored. With this campaign, though, everyone is interested and energetic. Every time we open a zoom it's like sunshine and rainbows: we have a wonderful time."

Alima, 19



Timings

Exploration
30 – 40 minutes

Activities

- In a safe and supportive manner ask the group if they are comfortable sharing their experiences of being lonely – offer that we can either discuss, or we could do a creative activity to help everyone get there, but the group has to decide. Get the group to decide.
 - If they want to chat in a group, just let that happen and nurture it.
- OR
- Introduce the idea of maps. Maps show routes for journeys, how to get from one place to another. Some maps are very clear, and some are ore maps of territories and terrains and you have to find your own way through. It might not always be obvious where you are going.
 - Now we're going to map our own journeys of loneliness in our books or on flipchart paper or snazzy paper. You can do it however you want - as a map of a real or imaginary, as a flow diagram, as a timeline, however you like. It can be as real-life or as magical as you like. Give everyone plenty of time, and we often find background music helps people feel more comfortable.
 - Ask someone to introduce what they've drawn, and what it means to them. Ask them to pass their book around the circle, and everyone to say what is it in this image that seems really truthful, or strikes a chord for them, or they can relate to (you are *not* asking them to critique the image or judge the quality – if anyone goes down that path, gently remind them we're looking at the metaphor as the important thing)
 - When the book gets around to the starting person, they get to say a final thing about how everyone reacted to their image. Then move on to the next person in the circle and start the process again. If you unsure if everyone wants to share, you could – instead – ask for someone to offer to share theirs next, but you must ensure everyone comments on whatever is shared.
 - Capture all the commentary on flip charts and stick them to the wall.

Resources

Appendix 2: Maps and flows printed out

Flip charts, pens, snazzy paper, crayons and oil pastels, craft supplies

Notes

- Background music. So, as with the idea of a neutral space with no posters on the wall, music for crafting or drawing our experiences should be non-lyrics based, and preferably reasonably unfamiliar to the group. You're using it to create a safe space and a mood, and to ensure the silence whilst people draw isn't awkward.
- Creative activity: this is probably obvious but all the sessional workers should join in this activity and draw on their experiences. You're trying to avoid 'them and us' situations.

"My favourite moment has been realising what we've done and what we've created. I think, for me personally, it's really rewarding"



Harry, 21

Timings

Comfort break
10 minutes

Discussion: the power of sharing stories
5 minutes

Activities

- We suggest tea, hot chocolate, cake, or other comforting snacks at this point.
- You might also go for a run-around. We like Granny's Banana as a team game, and to allow for some mischief.

- Invite the group to reflect on how they felt hearing each other's stories and what it was like telling your own.
- What does this mean about the reasons to share stories in the Lonely Not Alone universe – who benefits from that?
- Make notes on flipchart as usual, and stick to the wall.

Resources

Flipchart paper

Notes

- **Granny's Banana:** Granny stands looking at a wall, everyone else is down the other end of the room/tennis-court sized space. Granny has a banana/cushion/umbrella/some other improbable item at her feet, but she's facing the other way so it's nearer the group. Whenever she turns around the group have to freeze, but they can sneak up when she's facing away from them. The group have to sneak up on granny without her seeing them move, steal the banana/item, and then hide it from Granny. When she realises they've got it, she can guess who has it, but if she's wrong she has to turn around for at least 3 seconds, and the team have to try to get back to their starting position without her seeing them move, and without finding out who has the item. The game ends when either Granny is victorious and finds the item, or the group get safely home having snaffled it. If it's a pack of mars bars, everyone gets to eat it (and granny gets a prize for being a good sport)

Young people are rarely given opportunities to show their talent or to show what they're made of - we allowed them to do that. I'm really proud we were able to make a difference there."



Timings

Story telling session

40 minutes

Activities

- Introduce the story prompts from the Lonely Not Alone website.
- Remind everyone that it's really helpful if they can end with the final question – the One Small Step – but it's up to them what other questions they answer – they might only answer one, or choose something else to say about their experience of loneliness
- Remind everyone that they can share their story as a poem, as prose, as lyrics that are written or sung a capella, or rapped, or performed spoken word.
- Ask them to work on their response to the prompts: make sure they have space, the right surface to work on, and the equipment they need.
- When people are ready, direct them to add their story to the universe. <https://lna.wndrtest.com/addstory/>
- Optional: invite everyone who wants to, to share their story. Invite everyone to commentate again, but no need to write it all down this time, and it's ok for people just to say they loved it, or it really spoke to them.

Resources

<https://lna.wndrtest.com/addstory/>

Notes

Story Prompts are:

- How did your experience of loneliness start?
- What was going on in the world around you to make you feel lonely?
- How does loneliness make you feel?
- What do you wish other people knew about loneliness?
- If there has been one small step that you took, or someone else took, to help you feel less lonely, what was it? OR If you wish you or someone else could take one small step to help you feel less lonely, what would that be?
- If you have a youth work space with studio facilities you can really go for it at this point, but the website has a tiny studio-recording space built in to do vox recording – there's no need for anything fancy and it works on mobile, ipad, or a computer.

Warm down

20 minutes

- Circle time again: remind everyone we have come to the end of this session, but that Lonely Not Alone is an ongoing project. Once they have submitted their story they will be invited to join a constellation of other young people in the night sky, and that they will also be invited to join a Discord group if they are aged between 13 and 25. They can go back to read other stories, and the constellation they join is really visible in the night sky so they will be able to see themselves as stars in the real universe once they have their star name.
- Ask everyone around the circle to talk about one thing that's been really good for them over the two sessions, and one small step they're going to take for themselves and their wellbeing in the week ahead – whether to do with loneliness, or something else.



“Getting involved in this campaign has just been so incredible. Meeting the people who are from all over the world and just being able to talk about something and know that other people have experienced this as well, has been a relief.”

Feeding back

We would love to hear your feedback on how this session has gone- best bits, bits that were tricky, bits that you found surprising. Please send an email to Eloïse Malone: ellie@eff.org.uk



Thanks

Thanks to Steve Watson at Youth Focus: North East

Writing Credit

Written by Eloïse Malone, Effervescent, 2021

 **effervescent**

Lonely Not Alone: Helpful Resources

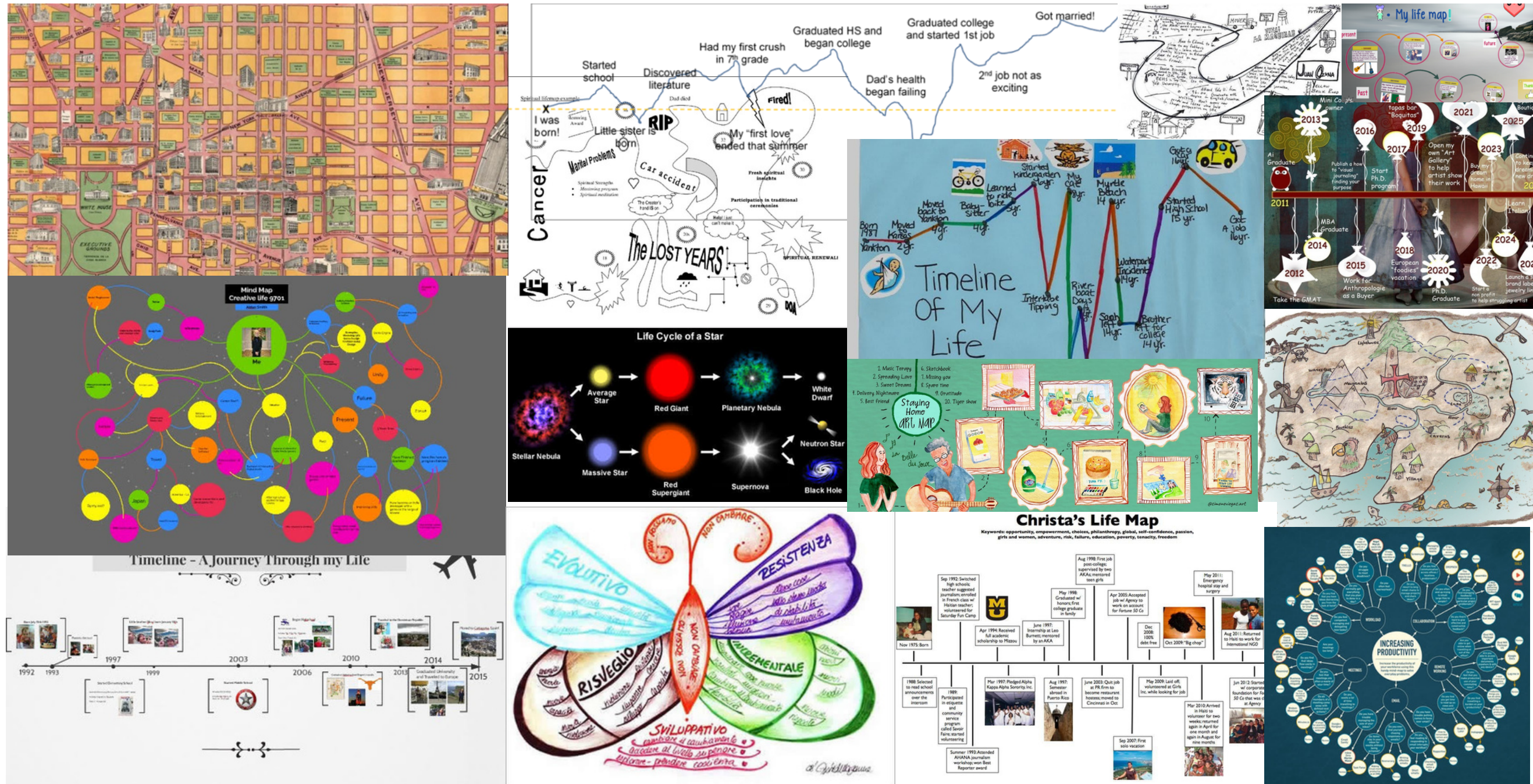


The universe goes on forever.

Loneliness doesn't have to.

Action for Kids	For disabled children and young people to live independent and fulfilling lives.	National Domestic Abuse Helpline	Refuge for women and children against domestic abuse
AnxietyUK	Support for people suffer with anxiety through online resources and a helpline.	NSPCC	Supports people who experience or who are affected by child abuse and sexual abuse.
Barnardo's	Offer support for young carers including activities, counselling, and emotional support.	The Princes Trust	Help with getting a job, starting your own business, or making a fresh start in life
Become	Working to improve the everyday lives and future life chances of children in care and young care leavers.	The Proud Trust	Supports LGBT+ young people
The Carers Trust	Provides activities, support and help for children and young people who care for a parent or sibling	Rise	Supports people affected by domestic abuse and violence
Childline	Provides support (through phone and online) to children struggling with a range of issues including bullying, abuse, safety, the law, you and your body, your feelings, friends, relationships, sex, home and families, education and work.	Runaway Helpline	Supports people who are thinking about running away, who have already run away, or if they have been away and come back
Children Heard and Seen	Support children and young people whose parents are in prison.	Shelter	Support and advice for people experiencing issues with housing.
Each Education	Supports people experiencing Homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying	The Refugee Council	Provides support and services to young refugees
Gingerbread	Gives support and advice to young parents	Traveller Movement	Supports ethnic Romany Gypsies, Irish Travellers, Roma and other members of the traveller movement.
Hope	Supports young people aged 11 to 25 when a close family member is diagnosed with a life-threatening illness,	Victim Support	Support children and young people who have been affected by crime.
Littletroopers	Supporting all children with one or both parents serving in the British Armed Forces, regular or reserve.	Winston's Wish	Provides emotional and practical bereavement support to children and young people
MenCap	Supporting people with a learning disability, and their families and carers.	Young Farmers	Support and activities for young people who live rurally.
The Mix	A support service for young people, helping with many issues - from mental health to money, from homelessness to finding a job, from break-ups to drugs	Young Minds	Whether you want to understand more about how you're feeling and find ways to feel better, or you want to support someone who's struggling, Young Minds can help
National Bullying Helpline	Information and Advice on bullying	Youth Employment	Support for unemployed young people.

Appendix 2: Maps and Journeys



Use this QR code to download these images for print-size quality

OR CLICK HERE



Appendix 3: Memes, quotes and images about loneliness

It's important to **catch the loneliness** before it **becomes second nature**

People think being alone makes you lonely, but I don't think that's true. Being surrounded by the wrong people is the loneliest thing in the world.

Kim Culbertson

The hardest walk is walking alone, but it is also the walk that makes you the strongest.

My biggest fear is that I will become too comfortable with the idea of being lonely for the rest of my life.

THE SOUL THAT SEES BEAUTY MAY SOMETIMES WALK ALONE.

- JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

Never allow loneliness to drive you into the arms of someone you know you don't belong with.

curiano.com

Loneliness is proof that your innate search for connection is intact.

I FEEL Lonely

every single day OF MY LIFE BUT I'M ASHAMED TO ADMIT THAT TO THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE ME

Lonely is not being alone, Lonely is being with people you can't trust or rely on.

Mouloud Benzadi

no matter how faraway you are from me when we look up into the clear night sky we will always see the same moon

Don't chase people. Be yourself, do your own thing and work hard. The right people, the ones who really belong in your life, will come to you and stay.

Over time, loneliness gets inside you and doesn't go away.

Carlos Ruiz Zafón

LET ME TELL YOU THIS: IF YOU MEET A LONER, NO MATTER WHAT THEY TELL YOU, IT'S NOT BECAUSE THEY ENJOY SOLITUDE. IT'S BECAUSE THEY HAVE TRIED TO BLEND INTO THE WORLD BEFORE, AND PEOPLE CONTINUE TO DISAPPOINT THEM.

JODI PICOULT

Your Tango

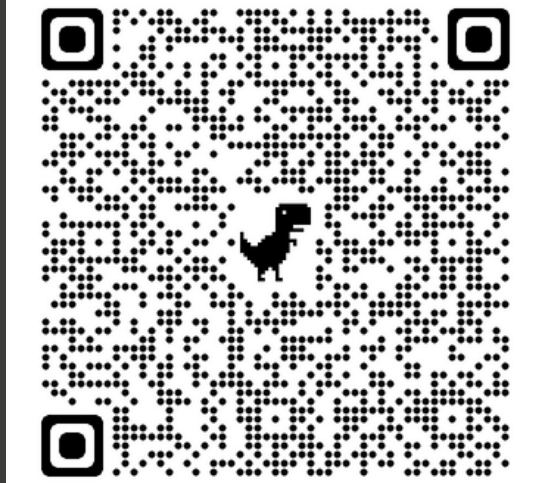
The loneliness you feel is actually an opportunity to reconnect with others and yourself.

Maxime Lagacé

SOMETIMES THE PERSON WHO TRIES TO KEEP EVERYONE HAPPY IS THE MOST LONELY PERSON

"Loneliness exists because you want to grab something from outside. Do not try to run away from loneliness. It is a blessing in disguise."

- Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar



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www.lonelynotalone.org



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