

FortisCare

LONELINESS AT CHRISTMAS

People suffer from loneliness due to many different reasons. It creeps up on you. None of us think it will happen to us, but suddenly it is there – you are on your own!

You might find yourself feeling lonely if:

- A close relative or friend has died
- You have lost contact with friends or family
- A relationship has broken down
- You no longer work and miss the social contact this provided
- You live alone
- You have moved to a new area
- You are caring for someone and don't have much opportunity to socialise
- You're living on a low income and can't afford to socialise as much as you would like
- You have an illness which makes you feel isolated from others, either emotionally or because it makes it hard for you to get out

HOW MANY ARE LONELY?

Half of all people aged **75** and over, live alone, and one in 10 people aged 65 or over, say they always, or often, feel lonely – that's just over a million people.

Statistics show that 25% of women aged forty-five to fifty-four suffer from a common mental health disorder such as depression, loneliness and anxiety compared with 14% of men. Between 1993 and 2007, the rate of common mental disorders rose by a fifth among middle-aged women.

A survey by Action for Children found that 43% of 17 – 25-year olds who used their service had experienced problems with loneliness, and that of this same group less than half said they felt loved. Action for Children have also reported 24% of parents surveyed said they were always or often lonely.

HOW MANY PEOPLE IN THE UK SUFFER FROM LONELINESS?

Loneliness affects people of all ages. A study by The Co-op and the British Red Cross reveals over **9 million people** in the UK across all adult ages. That is more than the population of London, are either always or often lonely.

If you know of a relative, friend or neighbour who is on their own over Christmas / New Year, it would mean so much to them if you popped around to share part of the festive season. It would make them realise that people do care.

WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT SOMEONE WHO IS LONELY?

Don't forget that some people may prefer to spend Christmas on their own. Keep any offer casual – you don't want to put anyone under pressure. It's very important

to only make an offer if you genuinely mean it so if you'd rather not invite someone over then don't make excuses for not doing so.

1. If you're having a Christmas party, think about inviting people in your neighbourhood or others who you know are going to be on their own – the more the merrier
2. You could invite someone out for a walk or a trip to the local carol singing event
3. It can be tough to spend Christmas Day surrounded by someone else's family all opening presents, so consider inviting someone for part of the day, like Christmas Lunch, or for a drink in the evening
4. You could drop a gift round to someone's house part-way through the day or just pop in for a cuppa
5. If you know an older person who is lonely, you could offer to help them find local community events over Christmas

YOU WOULD ALSO HAVE A WONDERFUL, WARM FEELING INSIDE FOR MAKING THAT PERSON'S LIFE SO MUCH MORE ENJOYABLE

