

Types of Loneliness

There are essentially three types of loneliness. Understanding which one is affecting your loved one will go a long way towards knowing how to help.

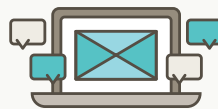
Social Loneliness

As our seniors age, they naturally drift apart from social circles they once had. Perhaps they've been moved to be closer to you, leaving behind friends and activities. This is a type of loneliness that occurs when you don't feel a sense of belonging to a group. Even if your parents are still together, there is a need for a wider social circle. Research senior activities in your area, even virtual calls, that might connect them with people outside of their home.



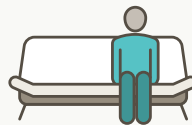
Emotional Loneliness

Emotional loneliness can hit those who have lost a partner and feel like they don't fit into their social circle where others still have their spouses or live-in children. It is a feeling of lack of relationship or attachment. Often it can be felt the worst when your senior wants someone to talk to each day. It can be helpful to reconnect them with same-generation relatives that they might have lost touch with. Even emails and text exchanges can go a long way towards restoring their sense of self.



Existential Loneliness

This is the most intangible of the types. It is generally more of a feeling of not knowing your place in the universe that most of us experience at one time or another. It typically shows its head in times of change when we don't know what to expect or don't realize that others are sharing the same life experience. Encourage your loved one to share their thoughts and feelings about aging or set them up with others in their age or medical group.



Source: [Psychology Today](https://www.psychologytoday.com)



Chronic Loneliness Risks

Chronic loneliness can lead to:

- Depression
- Sleep disorders
- Type 2 diabetes
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Mental health and emotional problems
- Substance abuse

Social isolation increases the risk of early death by **50–84%**! The stress of loneliness affects immune system functioning and increases inflammation, precursors to countless more complex medical issues.

Source: [National Institute of Health](https://www.nih.gov)