

BEATING LONELINESS: HOW TO STAY CONNECTED DURING ISOLATING TIMES

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REBEKAH BRYSON, LISW

PURPOSEFUL GROWTH AND WELLNESS

OHIO FAMILY 2 FAMILY

BOOSTER SESSION



ABOUT ME:

Hi there, I am Rebekah Bryson, and I enjoy helping young children through young adults develop strategies to help them be the best version of themselves. I specialize in helping families and children with developmental concerns and managing early childhood behaviors. I work with children to teach them coping skills to calm big emotions. In my work with adolescents and adults, we strive for gaining independence while learning communication skills, problem solving, and conflict resolution. In addition to working to develop individual skills, I also work with parents in determining their parenting style and establishing positive parent/child relationships.

- I obtained an undergraduate degree in Psychology and Child and Family Studies from Ashland University and a Masters in Social Work from University of Akron. I have worked with the Cleveland Clinic Center for Autism, Cleveland Clinic Center for ADHD, and Pediatric Behavioral Health for 12 years working with other mental health specialties, pediatricians, and medical providers to provide outpatient care for children with ADHD, Autism, learning disabilities, anxiety, depression, and other developmental concerns.
- I joined Purposeful Growth and Wellness in May, 2021 to continue my work in counseling individuals and families. We are a private practice who help individuals from 2 through adult meeting clients where they are at and helping them grow in and through their mental health.

OBJECTIVES

- How can you identify if a loved one is lonely
- What can you do to help them feel connected
- Where to get connected?



COVID-19 RESEARCH

- Prior to pandemic, >90% of caregivers of a child or adult with disabilities experienced stress, burnout, or loneliness (Feb, 2022; Global Brain Health Institute)
- According to the National Institute of Mental Health: While the term loneliness refers to subjective feelings, social isolation is defined by the level and frequency of one's social interactions.
- As a generally accepted concept, loneliness is defined as the subjective feeling of being alone, while social isolation describes an objective state of individuals' social environments and interactional patterns. Studies suggest that while loneliness and social isolation are not equal to each other, both can exert a detrimental effect on health through shared and different pathways (May, 2020).

THOUGHTS ABOUT LONELINESS/ISOLATION

- There are established ways to maintain feelings of being connected to others despite having to maintain social distancing. By *organizing* our activities every single day, we can become more resistant to the onset of feelings of loneliness.
- Loneliness is not the same as anxiety or depression
- “Loneliness isn’t just about the absence of social interaction. It’s about the absence of meaningful, fulfilling social connection,” Sarah Greenberg, a licensed psychotherapist
- One can feel lonely in the company of people

HOW TO RECOGNIZE IF YOUR LOVED ONE IS FEELING LONELY

- Withdrawal from daily activities
- Decreased participation in ADL's/hygiene
- Unexplained tiredness/over sleeping
- Avoidance of meals/over eating
- Irritability
- Change in mood or affect
- Lack of motivation
- Apathetic attitude

HOW TO IMPROVE LONELINESS: *QUESTIONS TO ASK*

- Notice the symptoms and assess willingness to improve
 - “I have noticed that you have been spending more time alone, is this something I can help you with”
 - “I feel like maybe life has felt a little isolating for you, I recognize that you are not taking care of yourself as frequently, and I’m wondering if we could talk about that”.
 - “I feel more tired and I think I’m sleeping more than normal”
 - “I notice even when I am around people, I feel withdrawn”

HOW TO IMPROVE LONELINESS: *QUESTIONS TO ASK*

- Talk through the concerns with your loved one/yourself
 - Do you feel like you are not getting out enough?
 - Are you worried/anxious about leaving the house?
 - Is there something that you can identify that is causing you to feel lonely?
 - Do you feel connected to the people you interact with?
 - Are you feeling fulfilled with your daily life?

HOW TO IMPROVE LONELINESS: *QUESTIONS TO ASK*

- Is this something that you/I want help with?
 - Is this feeling of loneliness lasting more days than not
 - Is it impairing my ability to care for my needs
- Do you feel like you have the motivation to help yourself?
 - Do not ask “Do you want to get better” but instead what are you motivated to change?
- Do you feel like you need outside help?
 - Should we seek out a counselor, nurse, caregiver to help get you back engaged?
- What have you done or can do to help myself

STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TOGETHER

- Create a schedule around daily activities
- Schedule 1-2 community outings a week (beyond work schedule, doctor appointments, therapy appointments)
- If leaving the house is too challenging, invite others to your home
- Set daily, weekly, and monthly goals (realistic)
- Create structured activities you can do at home
- Volunteer
- Seek out a community that feels safe and comfortable for you
- Find a safe person to talk to about your feelings

FOCUS ON QUALITY VERSUS QUANTITY

Ask yourself:

- What experiences are meaningful
- What do I really enjoy to do
- Who do I really enjoy to be with
- What experiences make me feel ME, loved, welcomed, alive, cared for, and real

WHAT IF THEY ARE RESISTANT

- At times, when individuals are feeling lonely, other symptoms are present as well—depression, anxiety, poor self esteem, etc.
- This may create resistant to wanting “help”, “guidance”, or “assistance”
- If you are feeling pushed away or helpless, it is ok to keep pushing
 - Create structure that will include your loved one
 - IE: we/you have an appointment at 1:00, we are going to get lunch before
 - Family is coming over the house tonight for dinner, can you help me sweep/prep dinner/etc.
 - Let’s work together on a puzzle
 - We have dinner at 6:00, be sure to shower and brush your hair before then

WHAT IF THEY ARE RESISTANT


- It is also ok to start small, as you cannot undo loneliness that may have been occurring over a long period of time.
- Recognize when as a parent/caregiver you may not be what they need
 - Seek out professional help—therapy, respite care, additional caregivers
 - If you feel like there are deeper feelings/emotions that should be processed, therapy is important
 - If you feel they may need more company or a different person to interact with seek out additional caregivers, respite care

WHERE TO TURN TO

- Volunteering:
 - Volunteers of America
 - Easter Seals
 - Respectability
 - ServiceSource
 - the Arc
 - United Way
- Therapy/Mental Health Resources:
 - Psychology Today
 - Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities
 - Local chapters

WHERE TO TURN TO

- Local churches
- Facebook support groups
- Local community libraries
- Disabilities Rights Ohio
- Neighbors, Family, Friends

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Thank you for your time and participation in today's talk. For more information or to learn more about how to best help your children and family, you can reach out to me at Purposeful Growth and Wellness

www.Purposefulgrowthandwellness.com

Rebekah@pgwcle.com

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