

ONE DAY YOU WILL FEEL LONELY: LEARNING FROM PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY ABOUT LONELINESS AND SOCIAL *isolation*

Linda Kurti; Leighton Jay; Rebecca Evans

*One day you will feel lonely.
It won't matter if you stand in isolation
or in a room full of people.
You will feel it deep, in the pit
of your stomach.
It will envelop you in its absence of warmth.
It will steal your breath.
And it will be sudden.
It might be the realisation that you will
always stand apart although you are near.
It might be that in the dead of night
the only sound in your ears is that
of your own breath.
There is no limitation for when
loneliness might strike.
You can be held in a loved one's
arms and know that you will never
be understood fully.
And that is loneliness.*

Adrian Thorne, 2023: Brotherhood
of the Wordless^o

INTRODUCTION

In August 2023, Australia had its first-ever Loneliness Awareness Week, the result of a growing body of evidence indicating that loneliness is a significant societal issue requiring attention. Australia is not alone. Many other countries have come to the same realisation. The Covid-19 pandemic contributed to an increase in the number of people experiencing loneliness and social isolation, and highlighted the risks that isolation can pose within our society. The pandemic also brought to light specific groups who are at greater risk of feeling lonely and isolated, eg people who live alone, older people and people with disability. Some of these suffered greatly under the restrictions imposed during the pandemic; many extended some of these restrictions further to protect themselves.

**ONE IN SIX AUSTRALIANS
WITH DISABILITY AGED
15-64 HAVE REPORTED
SOCIAL ISOLATION⁴**

Given this broader context, we have chosen to focus this paper on social isolation and loneliness as experienced by people living with disability. As a group, they experience loneliness and social isolation at greater rates than people without disability.^{1 2 3}



^o We are deeply grateful to members of the *Brotherhood of the Wordless* for contributing their thoughts about, and experiences of, loneliness. They represent a significant group of people who require skilled communication support and are rarely heard at any level in our society. We acknowledge the great wisdom of their lived experience and include their words with their permission.

One in six Australians with disability aged 15-64 have reported the experience of social isolation, almost double the number of people without disability who report the same.⁴ One study from a region in the United Kingdom found that 51% of people with disability reported feeling lonely compared to 15% of the people without disability; that number rises to 73% for people with intellectual disability.⁵ The study notes that the prevalence of loneliness and social isolation appears to vary for people depending on the type of impairment with which they live, such as physical, intellectual or emotional disability.

It is important to distinguish between loneliness and social isolation. Loneliness is a universal human experience, defined as “a subjective distressing experience that results from perceived isolation or inadequate meaningful connections”.¹ Almost every person will experience loneliness at some point in their lives; it may be a fleeting moment, a short-term period, or a chronic and long-standing experience. If it becomes a long-term

IF IT BECOMES A LONG-TERM EXPERIENCE, LONELINESS CAN HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON A PERSON'S MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH.

experience, loneliness can have a negative impact on a person's mental and physical health, so much so that it has been identified as a risk factor for poor health by the US Surgeon-General.¹ Reportedly, one in four people in Australia have experienced this type of enduring loneliness.³

Social isolation is a more objective experience than loneliness. “Social isolation is concerned more with environmental impoverishment or restrictions than with the individual's ability to create and maintain social relationships”.⁵ Many people enjoy periods of solitude in which they spend time alone without feeling lonely. That is not social isolation, which occurs when people do not have access to or experience of meaningful social relationships. Similar to chronic loneliness, social isolation has been identified as a negative factor in health and wellbeing, with people with disability identified as more vulnerable to social isolation than people without disability.^{1 4 5 6}

DISABILITY

The term ‘disability’ can itself be problematic for some people, both within and outside the disability community. It is such a broadly applied label that it encompasses people with conditions that have nothing in common diagnostically. Disabled people are as varied and individual as any other segment of the population.⁴ They may have visible or invisible disabilities; they may live independently or with friends or family; they may require assistance with some activities of daily living but not others; they may work full-time, raise a family and be active participants in their local communities. People may have been born with a disability or may have acquired a disability



through ageing, accident, or disease.

The practice of using disability as a term with such broad applicability has little resonance in many non-English speaking cultures. This can make the task of translating the concept quite difficult. For example, the concept is not found historically or culturally in Australian Aboriginal communities, or in some migrant communities in Australia.

Despite this, the term disability is widely used in Australia and many other countries. At one level, it is generally defined as self-reported limitations or impairments that have lasted more than six months and that restrict participation in, or completion of, everyday activities.² At another level, the social model of disability has become dominant in the disability community (rather than the previously widespread 'medical model of disability'). It is frequently used to underpin public policy.

In our context, this is important to note. The social model of disability recognises that individuals may have physical, mental or other impairments, but argues that these become disabling in the context of personal, societal and community places, structures, rules, norms, attitudes and behaviours. For example, the fact of being a wheelchair user becomes much more disabling when a building can only be accessed via stairs. Someone who

communicates without using spoken words is more disabled when the people around them don't recognise their communication and the person is not provided with the skilled support they need to communicate.

Linda writes:

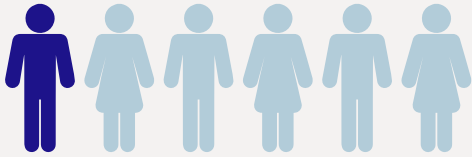
Many years ago a friend who uses a wheelchair came to visit my home for the first time. Until that moment, I had not even noticed that there was a small step up into the house from the front pavement, or that the step down into the bathroom might provide a mobility challenge for some. Together we navigated these obstacles on that night and many others, but it was an illuminating moment for me as I realised how little awareness I had of the barriers in the physical environment around me.

We will return to this in due course. Disability, defined as conditions that result in impairments and limitations, is more prevalent in the population than many realise. Worldwide, approximately 1.3 billion people live with a significant disability.⁷ Within the European Union over 17% of the population, some 107 million people, live with a condition which limits their activities.⁸ In Australia, about 18% of the population (approximately 4.4 million people) live with a disability, of whom about a third live with a severe or profound condition requiring support. The prevalence of disability increases as we get older, with 50% of Australians over 65 living with a disability.^{4b}



IN AUSTRALIA, ABOUT 18% OF THE POPULATION APPROXIMATELY 4.4 MILLION PEOPLE) LIVE WITH A DISABILITY

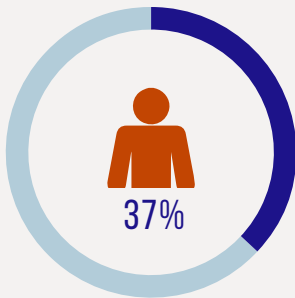
^b In the disability community, some people prefer the term 'disabled person' while others prefer the term 'person with disability'. We have adopted the latter term throughout this paper for consistency.



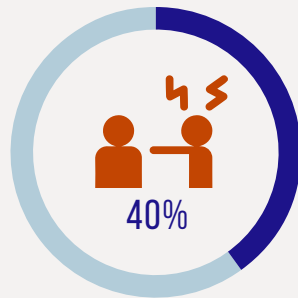
ONE IN SIX AUSTRALIANS LIVE WITH A DISABILITY, APPROXIMATELY 4.4 MILLION PEOPLE.



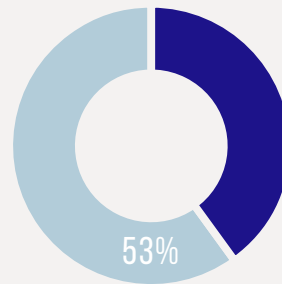
96% of people with disability live in private accommodation, and **64%** of those who are non-dependents are homeowners.



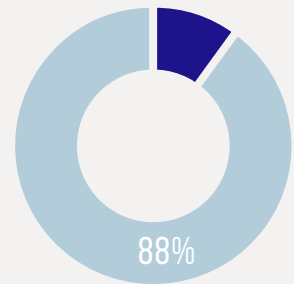
37% of people who receive a disability support pension have a psychological or psychiatric condition.



10% of people with a disability over the age of 15 experienced discrimination due to their disability in the past year, and **40%** have experienced violence.⁴



53% of people of working age with disability have employment; **88%** of these do not require support to work.



3 IN 5 ADULTS WITH DISABILITY CONSIDER THAT THEIR HEALTH IS GOOD, VERY GOOD OR EXCELLENT.



AIHW 2002b

CONTEXT FOR THIS DISCUSSION

In the last few years, two related phenomena have had a significant impact on the experience of loneliness and social isolation for people with and without disability. First, the Covid-19 pandemic forced sudden and unexpected changes to daily life that exacerbated levels of loneliness and social isolation for many. The strict isolation requirements imposed by governments and public health officials decreased, at least temporarily, the amount and quality of social interaction for many people.

A second factor affecting perceptions of

social isolation for many has been social media. Social media has been both a blessing and a challenge for many people, with or without disability. For many people with disability, online interactions during the pandemic have been a positive input into their lives, reducing barriers for communication and engagement and increasing opportunities to build and maintain relationships.⁹ At the same time, others may have experienced what has been called ‘extended loneliness’, a subjective experience of feeling lonely even while connected to many people through social media and other online networks.¹⁰

An individual's experience of loneliness or social isolation can change over time, depending on our social or professional connections, physical and mental health, or the health and safety of our neighbourhoods.¹ For many of us, that means we can play an active part in improving our own sense of social connection by reaching out to others around us. Indeed, one of the positive aspects of the pandemic, for some, was the creativity demonstrated by families, neighbours and communities as people found ways to reduce social isolation and retain authentic social connection.¹¹

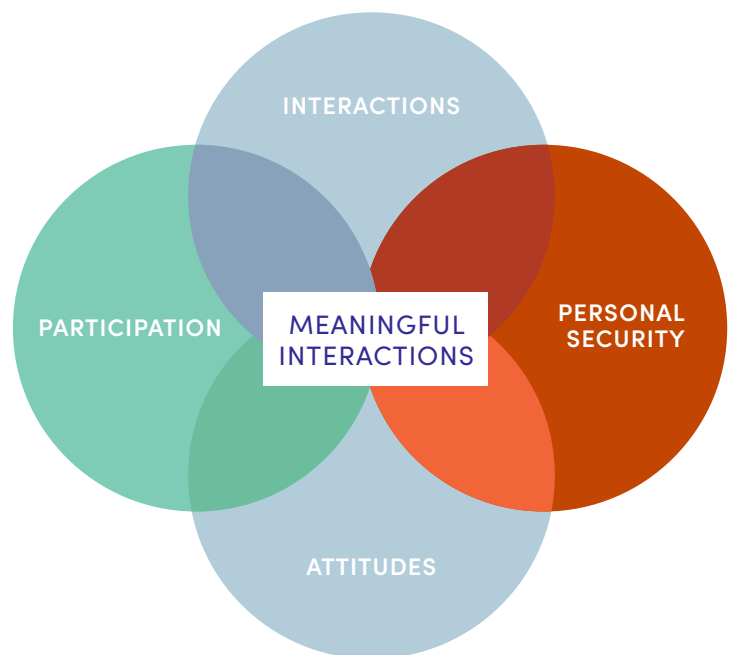
As we emerge from the pandemic, and as there is increasing awareness of the incidence of loneliness and social isolation in our world, we wanted to look at the particular experiences of people with disability. The question we posed was this: what can we learn about loneliness and social isolation from the experiences of people with disability? Our theory is that in an equitable and just society, addressing the needs of those who experience the greatest vulnerability will benefit everyone by creating a more diverse, creative, and connected community.

The following discussion is organised around a framework created by Professor Andrea Wigfield and her colleagues in the United Kingdom.¹² Wigfield and her team argue that our social experiences are influenced by four domains which lead to the presence or absence of meaningful social interactions:

- **INTERACTIONS**
- **PARTICIPATION**
- **PERSONAL SECURITY**
- **ATTITUDES.**

WHAT CAN WE LEARN ABOUT LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY?

These four domains are inter-related, with each influencing the other, as shown in the diagram below. Throughout the article we have included the voices of people with disability from the research literature as well as provided directly to us by members of the [Brotherhood of the Wordless](#). We have also included our own personal experiences.



Adapted from Wigfield et al. (2022)

INTERACTIONS

Every day most of us will have the opportunity to interact with someone, whether in the grocery store, the coffee shop, on the bus, at work or in the schoolyard. Small interactions, particularly those regular ones (for instance, smiling as you pass the same person on the street every day, or chatting with the barista who knows your coffee order), help us to feel recognised. We exist and have been noticed by someone. If your day is filled with these incidental interactions, you are more likely to feel connected with your neighbourhood or the people around you.

Conversely, a lack of these experiences can lead to a sense of isolation, a

feeling that you don't belong or that no one notices you. This can contribute to feelings of loneliness which, over time, have been shown to contribute to poorer physical and mental health outcomes.

Rebecca writes:

As someone who has moved across the country, I have really got to know the real meaning of social isolation and loneliness, and perhaps not in the way you might think. In my hometown of Perth, I had plenty of community connections – family, university, volunteering, disability advocacy, sport. Conversely, Melbourne is a whole new city for me – new people, new places, new communities. But it's not until I moved to Melbourne that I discovered just how socially isolated, and somewhat lonely, I was in Perth. But why? I think it comes down to two main reasons for me. The first is the quantity of connections is not the same as quality of connections. Secondly, accessibility – and I think this is the main one. In Perth, I spent most days in my bedroom, because going anywhere meant getting in a car and driving half an hour (minimum). But here in Melbourne, community is at my doorstep. I simply need to step out the front door to access community – whether it be others in my building, going to a restaurant or café strip, or going to local markets. As someone who fatigues easily, the simplicity of accessing community is pivotal in how likely I am to regularly interact with others and seek social opportunities. Something as small as the apartment building concierge giving you a smile and saying “hello, how are you?” can go a long way to reduce loneliness.

IF YOUR DAY IS FILLED WITH INTERACTIONS, YOU ARE MORE LIKELY TO FEEL CONNECTED WITH PEOPLE AROUND YOU.

Some people with mobility challenges may be hampered in these daily incidental interactions by limitations in the physical environment, such as stairs, uneven pavements, or lack of transport. People with unusual physical characteristics may feel vulnerable to criticism or derogatory comments. People who do not communicate verbally may feel that they are not welcome because their communication is not noticed or understood by others. All of these factors can be addressed and improved to encourage greater inclusion.

Luke Cowan writes:

I feel loneliness from dawn to dusk. It's a permanent state, even when I'm in a crowd. I never feel real companionship unless I have a facilitator to put my thoughts together and communicate them to the world. It's a barrier between me and the rest of the world and leaves me in an isolated space, and unable to penetrate through to the world out there. When I'm with someone who can help me penetrate that mesh, I feel at peace and alive. Then I'm not lonely at all and my needs are met for that short time. The world is a great place. I want so much to be part of it, but it is so hard to get all the ducks in a row. I love it when I get the opportunity to be part of the world as an equal player and not a person on the side lines. It's great to be included and I appreciate the effort. (2023; Brotherhood of the Wordless)

PARTICIPATION

Social interaction is the foundation for participation. This domain is connected to having a voice and political representation, being involved in social, cultural and civic activities and having access to work. At a concrete experience level, this can encompass things such as joining faith communities or sporting clubs, engaging in neighbourhood events, having paid work, voting, activism, or hanging out in the local park.

Many individuals, organisations and community groups are not aware of the visible and invisible barriers that may hamper participation by people with disability. Creating opportunities for social participation may require planning and logistic arrangements, or changing the way a group communicates to accommodate the needs of a participant who has accessibility needs.

Leighton writes:

I know a very sociable and outgoing man with intellectual disability who has cultivated longterm friendships for over 40 years, including with me. His friends know him well and love him. In spite of this, there have been two occasions in the past year where he has experienced being totally excluded when invited to social gatherings hosted by friends. They let him down. I was one of those who let him down. Our friendships survived. We are humbled and wiser. And very grateful that our friend is forgiving and helps us learn how to do better. We could have slowed conversations down. We could have changed topics to ones that would include him in the conversations. We could have explicitly invited him to contribute to the discussion.

We could have been more thoughtful beforehand about what would best enable our friend to connect with others and have meaningful interactions. In future, we will do better. (Story included with the friend's consent.)

As Leighton's story shows, inviting participation is not just about the need for ramps or other means of improving physical access. It is the sense of walking into a room or group and immediately being perceived as different and, therefore, as potentially less welcome. It is the accessibility of technology and communication mediums that people are expected to use. Groups and organisations can work proactively and intentionally to ensure that they are as deliberately welcoming of people who may move, communicate, or respond differently as they are of anyone else.

For example, Scope Australia oversees an internationally recognised [Accessible Communication accreditation process](#) for businesses and community groups. The accreditation process ensures that organisations become much more aware of the importance of communication



accessibility, and develop the skills, systems and behaviours they need to be more welcoming and inclusive of people who communicate in alternative ways.

Participation means a sense of belonging, of being part of a social environment and being accepted and valued by others. It means being able to contribute in one's own unique way to the activities of a larger group. Finding a welcoming group of like-minded people who share common interests or hobbies can foster feelings of belonging and be an important buffer against social isolation and loneliness.

Rebecca writes:

I self-manage my support workers and can choose who best suits my lifestyle. As their employer, I instruct them on how I want to be supported. This, alongside being someone who is verbal, has given me a sort of privilege in being able to engage with my community. But not everyone has that, so it's important for support workers to recognise their role in being facilitators of community engagement. If a person with disability wants to be less socially isolated and lonely, taking them to the local coffee shop every week and facilitating conversations among regulars and staff, or taking them to an interest group (like Lego, sport or gaming) can be simple ways to begin. Support their desire to engage with others and don't forget to ask them "how can I best support you to participate in your community?"

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PERSONAL SECURITY

We all have the need to be safe and to feel safe. Most of us have a sense of what it feels like to be safe physically or psychologically. Personal security refers to that sense of safety which is above and beyond the presence or absence of fear of crime.¹²

In recent years this has been made tangible for all of us through the restrictions introduced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We have all had a taste of what it might feel like not to feel physically safe in a public place or on public transport, to feel at risk of injury or death due to something that we can't see. However, people with disability have been disproportionately affected by these restrictions.¹¹ People with disability are not only at greater risk of death from Covid-19 than people without a disability; they are far more likely to have difficulty accessing the care and support they need to maintain their health and wellbeing.^{9,11} Although restrictions have lifted and life has returned to 'normal' for most, some of the most immuno-compromised members of society continue to self-isolate. As one person said to Leighton, "why would I go to the shops when it could be a death sentence for me?" In this context, it becomes even more important to discover ways to help people feel safe while building and maintaining social connection.

Quite apart from exposure to pathogens, the ability to navigate physical and personal spaces safely are key components of physical security. There is a vulnerability that comes with requiring support from others for personal care and daily living tasks. The way these tasks are approached at home by caregivers can contribute to a person feeling less safe or choosing not to go out and participate in social events.

Then there is the sense of personal safety

associated with how members of the public might respond to, or interact with, a person with disability. Disability discrimination is a commonly reported experience. Being subject to derogatory comments, abuse, violence or isolation in a crowd can all contribute to feelings of perceived threat.^{4 14} These in turn, can cause people to limit their interactions or participation, thus promoting social isolation and loneliness.

“The weaker pupils, those who could not defend themselves, become bullied. Disability was one of the reasons. It caused anxiety for me: I neither trust people nor make acquaintances easily. I want to be alone. I enjoy when I am able to live without mockery. I do not want to meet my former classmates; I was so distressed at that time. I blamed myself: I thought it was my fault that I was not able to stop being bullied.”¹³

Finally, there is the personal security of travelling on public transport, or in private transport such as taxis. Most of us who use these forms of transport trust that we will be treated respectfully and will be taken where we wish to go. For people who require physical support, such as getting in and out of taxis or trains, there can be safety concerns as to how they will be treated by others and whether the support they require will be available when they need it.

ATTITUDES

Perhaps most importantly, attitudes shape the way each of us see the world. Attitudes have their origin in the beliefs we hold and the assumptions we make, two things that often operate below our level of conscious awareness. For all of us, the way we see the world – as a fearful place or as one filled with possibility – is formed early on as children. For a person with disability, their own attitudes towards what is possible may influence how socially

connected or isolated they become. Feeling accepted and valued by others is key to feeling secure in interactions with friends as well as strangers.

Additionally, the attitudes of others towards us can shape the way in which we see ourselves and engage with the world around us. If a person receives a genuine respectful welcome and an authentic relational engagement from an early age, they are more likely to trust and expect that they will receive this in the future and that the world will usually receive them in this way. If a person has been disregarded from an early age, with their voice suppressed or their wishes and desires thwarted or misunderstood, then they may be less likely to trust that the world will be kind to them. Such experiences can create a vicious cycle in which negative experiences cause us to withdraw, leading to loneliness, and increasing our fear of engaging.

Michael Russell writes:

*I'm not lonely often, but I get lonely when I feel I'm not being listened to properly. I get a bit cross when people won't listen to me and I think they're laughing at me ... I see sarcasm and criticism where none exists ... I'm still learning that my current life is real. I need to be more trusting and able to be grateful and just bloody well enjoy my life as it unfolds.
(2023; Brotherhood of the Wordless)*

Structural or systemic exclusion can often be unthinking, as when events are held in venues which are not accessible to people with mobility requirements. Jason Olsen in his article, *Socially Disabled*, recounts an experience of spending six hours to negotiate tickets and access arrangements to an event, compared to the few minutes a non-disabled person might spend buying tickets online.

*"[I was reminded] of the lack of barriers that those without disabilities face on a daily basis, that they take accessibility for granted, and that it rests solely upon disabled people to not only fight to be included, but to educate those within our social circles about the barriers we face. Both of which can be very exhausting."*¹⁴

Rebecca writes:

I, along with others I know with disability, still to this day experience discrimination and lack of accessibility when purchasing tickets. I often attend concerts and while I enjoy being right down the front and with other concert goers, I do have specific support needs that need to be accommodated (such as attending with a support worker). Recently, I spent over two hours on the phone (which due to a speech impairment is inaccessible to me, but that's another topic!) to purchase tickets to a concert that I could have purchased online in less than two minutes, if I didn't need a support worker to accompany me and didn't need a wheelchair spot. A little consideration could go a long way in reducing the amount of time and thought that I need to spend to attend an event and ensure it will be accessible.

In the centre of the framework by Wigfield et al. (see page 5) we are using is the key phrase "meaningful interactions". What people with disability know about loneliness and social isolation, and can share with the world, is that simply having a presence in the community or having 'shallow' interactions with others fails to address loneliness. "The quality and nature of the interactions is important, and *meaningful* interaction – that is a positive interaction,

that is not only superficial, with someone who is valued, can reduce feelings of loneliness".⁶ In fact, having a purpose and feeling valued have been identified as two elements of meaningful interactions and as protective factors against loneliness.⁶

SO WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

The Covid-19 pandemic has made visible what has been called 'an epidemic of loneliness'.¹ It provides us with an opportunity to respond by addressing barriers that have, for too long, been an unexamined part of the world in which we live. Research has shown that people who experience chronic loneliness or social isolation have poorer health outcomes and reduced life expectancy.^{1 15} This shows up very strongly among people with disability, especially among people who experience really significant barriers to inclusion, belonging and acceptance.⁵

Organisations, community groups and governments around the world are seeking to find ways to alleviate isolation and loneliness. The United Kingdom and Japan have each created a Minister for Loneliness, emphasising the strategic importance of reducing isolation across society. These countries have led campaigns to raise awareness of, and respond to, loneliness and in 2021 released [a joint statement](#) affirming their commitment to reducing



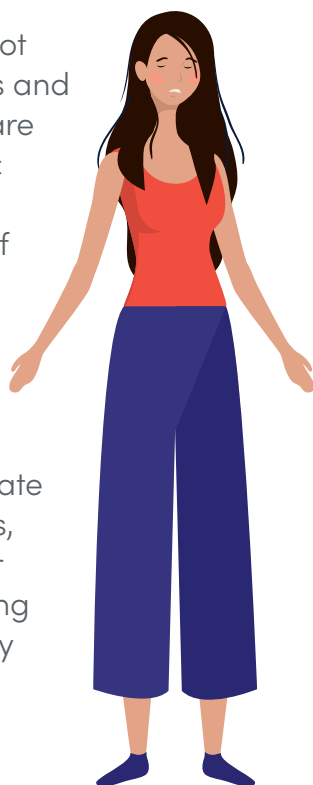
loneliness and isolation. The *Global Initiative on Loneliness and Connection* (www.glic.global) brings together national organisations committed to addressing loneliness to share information, ideas, and innovative approaches.

In Australia, the [Ending Loneliness Together](#) (ELT) initiative seeks to create “a world where every single person feels a sense of connection and belonging”.³ In August 2023, ELT released a [State of the Nation Report](#) examining social connection in Australia, which demonstrates that loneliness is widespread and has many causal factors.

To reduce loneliness, many public policy settings will need to change. For example, [Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-2031](#) “calls on all Australians to ensure people with disability can participate as equal members of society”.¹⁶ The Strategy goes on to identify seven areas of life which require changes in order to improve the inclusion of people with disability:

- employment and financial security;
- inclusive homes and communities;
- safety, rights and justice;
- personal and community support;
- education and learning;
- health and wellbeing; and
- community attitudes.

However, policy does not change people’s hearts and few of us will think we are able to influence public policy. So, in keeping with the social model of disability, what can we do personally that will be effective? The best antidote to loneliness and social isolation is relationships that create meaningful interactions, and relationships occur between people. Trusting relationships with family and friends create a



buffer of safety and a sense of belonging which can mitigate social isolation and prevent or reduce loneliness.

Faith communities, neighbourhood groups, sporting clubs, interest and hobby groups, and local social gatherings such as those organised by [Befriend](#) or on meetup.com are ideally placed to foster the creation of relationships and so counter the effects of social isolation and loneliness. Indeed, this is the philosophy behind ‘social prescribing’ in which health professionals prescribe social activities rather than drugs for some patients.¹⁷

Given the prevalence of loneliness and social isolation in Australia today, it is highly likely that many people near you will benefit from social engagement, connection and meaningful interactions. There are a number of very practical things that community organisations, faith communities, and individuals can do to reduce social isolation and loneliness.

1. LOOK AROUND TO SEE WHO IS MISSING

Are there people with a disability – visible or invisible – in your neighbourhood, faith community, or social circle? If not, how can you be more inclusive or welcoming of them? How can you communicate that people with disability are welcome?

2. ASK, WHO ELSE IS MISSING?

Are there people from different cultural and language backgrounds? People for whom English is a second, third or non-existent language? Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people? What can be done to invite and welcome them in? What will meaningful interactions look and feel like in this context?

3. CONSIDER THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

What barriers – physical, psychological, attitudinal, or communication – might limit participation for some people? How can these be addressed?

4. CONSIDER WHAT ACTIONS OR WORDS MIGHT MAKE PEOPLE FEEL WELCOME

People with intellectual disability, acquired brain injury and other forms of cognitive impairment are among the most marginalised and socially isolated people in Australia. They often need intentional thoughtfulness about communication to feel genuinely welcomed and included. Who in your area can help you learn how to be more welcoming and inclusive? [Inclusion Australia](#) has useful resources and information that can help people to learn how best to include people with disability.

5. TALK OPENLY ABOUT LONELINESS

[The State of the Nation Report](#) says that many people who feel chronically lonely feel ashamed about it and don't talk about their feelings. Being willing to talk about how widespread loneliness and social isolation are will help reduce shame and stigma.

6. FINALLY, REMEMBER THAT MEANINGFUL INTERACTIONS ARE TWO-WAY

If we open our hearts and minds to give to others, we can also gain rich benefits by receiving what people who are very different to us have to offer.

Judith Snow, a Canadian writer and activist who lived with a significant disability, put it like this:

“Look around for an opportunity to enter into a relationship with someone who has been exiled. Act on the faith that this person has dreams and hopes much like your own and that this person has meaning in her or his life that can be conveyed to you and that has the power to enrich your life and the lives of others.

“Understand that this person may be the bearer of a deep and creative dream. Bend your will and inner and outer ear to listen to this dream. Walk into the daily activities and environments of life with this person as dream and reality interact in a creative dance that expresses the meaning of life.

“Try this and may you rejoice in all that you create together.”¹⁸



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Linda Kurti PhD is a social researcher, facilitator and strategist supporting the health, ageing and disability sectors.

Leighton Jay PhD is the parent to a man with complex disability-related support needs. He works as a disability consultant and advocate.

Rebecca Evans is a young woman with lived experience of physical disability. She is a disability advocate and a PhD researcher in the area of independent living for people with disability.

USEFUL LINKS

- Ending Loneliness Together
<https://endingloneliness.com.au>
- Inclusion Australia
<https://www.inclusionaustralia.org.au/>
- Befriend Inc.
<https://befriend.org.au/>
- Scope Australia
Accessible Communication
<https://www.scopeaust.org.au/business-solutions/communication-access>
- Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031
<https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021-11/1786-australias-disability.pdf>
- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations
<https://www.afdo.org.au>
- Brotherhood of the Wordless
<https://brotherhoodofthewordless.com/>
- How to treat a person with disabilities, according to people with disabilities - VICE
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6c6JLbczC8>
- Changing the way we talk about disability – TEDx Talk, Amy Oulton
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WIP1VgPnco>
- The truth about growing up disabled – TEDx Talk, Dylan Alcott
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvNOzJ7x8qQ>
- Sexuality and disability: forging identity in a world that leaves you out – TEDx Talk, Gaelynn Lea
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akGYugciSVw>

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