

Breaking isolation

Depression really thrives when you feel alone or isolated. Reading the Student Stories on this site can make a difference to this. But nothing can substitute for human-to-human contact, especially when we know that someone else knows how we really feel.

This worksheet will help you think about small, immediate ways to break your isolation, and about how to prepare to take the first step of telling someone how you feel.

1. Reaching out

Brainstorm:

What is one small way I can reach out to someone else/other people, so I'm just a little less lonely or isolated? List up to 5 ideas, making sure you stick to things that don't feel too difficult or threatening, but don't expect to 'feel like it'. (eg. ring home for a chat or contact an old friend, stay on after lectures to hang out with class mates, ask a housemate if you can walk in to uni with them instead of going on your own, speak to someone who looks left out, just smile at someone in the corridor, ask someone over for a cup of tea, say yes to an invitation you would usually say no to, 'people watch' at the park for a while)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Now consider your list and set yourself the challenge of doing at least one of them this week. Choose the easiest one first and write yourself an intention statement to make it a clear goal for this week.

My breaking isolation intention statement:

Example:

This week I will Offer to cook dinner for my housemate Gemma (what) on Friday night (when) and stay on in the kitchen for a chat afterwards (where) instead of eating cereal in my room as usual (how/long)

This week I will _____ (what)
_____ (when)



_____ (where)

_____ (how/long)

Once you have managed to do one, or if that one doesn't work out, then you can go on to choose another one.

See also the 'Connecting with others' page and worksheet for ways to plan ongoing contact with others, to break the pattern of loneliness and isolation that depression often reinforces.



"I didn't feel I really had anyone I could talk to, because it was my first year and I didn't feel that close to anyone yet, but I eventually told my flatmate, Pete, and he made a point of at least coming in and giving me a bit of company every day." – Daniel

2. Consider telling someone how I feel

Read the list of possible people you could talk to on the 'Breaking isolation' page.

Ask yourself:

If I could imagine telling someone how I am really feeling right now, who would it be? Spend some time thinking about who the easiest person would be to talk to first.

Build on these first steps by using the 'Build support networks' section to identify the best people to talk to, in order to get some support with how you are feeling.

If you are moderately or severely depressed, or if you feel that you are possibly at risk to yourself, then you should make it a priority to see a doctor or counsellor. See the 'Counsellors & doctors' section for how these professionals can help.

