



TIPS TO CONQUER LONELINESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Starting an apprenticeship or traineeship is challenging. But what happens if you find yourself isolated at work? These six tips can help.

Speak up, reach out

This might seem scary, especially if you're an introvert, but when you start working at a new job, let your voice be heard. Try these:

- Make an effort to learn your new team's names.
- Greet your new colleagues every morning, and ask them how they are. Listen to their answers, and perhaps share a story of your own.
- Remember details, such as who plays sports, or who enjoys watching movies.
- Say goodbye when you leave.
- Make contributions during meetings, even if they are small.
- When you see someone sitting alone at lunch, reach out and ask if you can join them.

Use your strengths as tools

Identifying and embracing your personal strengths can help you forge relationships in the workplace. Think about what makes you, "you". Now think how each of your strengths can help you build connections at work. Does someone share your sense of humour? Is there a colleague who needs help with a challenge you find simple? What you're good at or what you love could lead to a new friendship.

Embrace life offline

Switch off your phone and talk to a human in real life. Research on loneliness has found that being constantly connected or "on" can actually cause us to become more isolated. Physical interaction is important to connect with others, so make an effort to develop face-to-face relationships with your team.

Join In

When you first start working, chances are you're going to be exhausted and a bit bewildered by all the new responsibilities. Take time out when needed to process. But every so often, try to take part in office activities that can help you forge new friendships. Join your team for lunch or team building days, or volunteer to organise a work get together.

Get to know the workplace pro

Connect with a person that's been working for the company for a while. Ask them for insight and advice, find out more about your workplace culture, and ask them to introduce you to other colleagues that you might not have met otherwise.

Don't give up

If your team don't respond to your efforts to connect immediately, don't give up. It's easy to get discouraged and take things personally, but it's important to persist. Remember: your colleagues are only human, and are all probably struggling with some degree of loneliness, too. You don't have to make friends with everybody, either – just finding one person that is willing to spend some time with you already makes a huge difference.

WHERE TO GET HELP

You're not in this alone – if things are getting too overwhelming, ask for help. It does not make you weak!

You can find help here:

- Online support forum Beyond Blue: **www.beyondblue.org.au**, **1300 22 4636**. You can also email them, or chat to them online.
- Kids Helpline's motto is "Anytime. Any reason." They focus on ages from 5 to 25 and help you access support groups and peers going through similar tough stuff, so don't be afraid to use them: **<https://kidshelpline.com.au/>** or **1800 55 1800**
- Lifeline focuses on crisis support and suicide prevention: **www.lifeline.org.au/** or **12 11 14**

Did you know?

Loneliness impacts your physical health. Feeling constantly lonely can make you more vulnerable to getting ill, lower your self-esteem and influence your sleep. It can also impact your productivity at work. The Young Australian Loneliness survey has found that higher levels of loneliness increases the risk of developing depression and social anxiety. Johann Hari, the author of the book *Lost Connections*, described the impact of loneliness as causing as much stress as being punched by a stranger.

Get in touch

Please call **1300 363 831** and ask to speak to one of our Apprentice Advisors or email us at **intrainingsupport@businessaustralia.com**