

Loneliness and Isolation

Loneliness is a subjective state of feeling disconnected from other people, while isolation is defined as having minimal contact with others. These feelings are not uncommon, with most of us feeling isolated or lonely at some point in our life. According to our most recent needs analysis, 36% of parents of small children with cystic fibrosis (CF) identified concerns with isolation and/or loneliness. At least 1 in 4 people are currently experiencing an episode of loneliness.

Grief and trauma associated with having CF or caring for someone with CF can exacerbate normal feelings of loneliness and isolation, particularly when unwell, hospitalised or struggling with commitments. There can also be feelings that those closest to us could not understand our inner experiences and emotions.

Feelings of loneliness greatly increase physical and mental health problems, including things like high blood pressure, immune responses, stroke and mental health. Evidence strongly correlates negative emotions with inflammation and poorer lung health (Quittner).

Loneliness is complex and may result from many different factors. It's not just a lack of social connection, it can actually be a disease needing early detection and treatment. If it becomes overwhelming, professional help should be sought.



Connection or Feeling Connected

Connection is the opposite of loneliness. At its very core it begins with our relationship with ourselves, how we interpret, acknowledge, and accept particular situations and experiences. Self-acceptance and self-compassion are the foundation blocks to building connection and a sense of belonging with others. Understanding that loneliness is inherent to the human experience helps us understand that we are not alone in this feeling and that to reach out to others links us in common experiences.

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

FOMO is something that most people with CF and families of people with CF experience; sometimes feeling lonely, frustrated, and isolated due to missing events and special occasions because of hospitalisations, clinic appointments, exacerbations, or simply fatigue.

Tips to avoid FOMO from an adult with CF:

- Stay off social media.
- Have your own party, you don't have to be alone. If you have had to cancel something, find someone close to spend time with you, watch a movie, play a game or just hang out.
- Do something that makes you feel good e.g. write, read, meditate, do something that relates to your core values so that you forget about what you're missing.
- Get some rest.

Overcoming Loneliness

- **Connect** with friends and family. If you can't do it in person, Covid-19 has at least taught us all to be more technologically savvy.
- **Do the things you love** - e.g. play cards, exercise, do some art, games, social clubs or study. There are also groups for introverts and shy people.
- **Try mindfulness, meditation or yoga** - it will help calm your mind and anxiety about meeting new people and trying new things.
- **Get involved in your community**- there are always different things going on e.g. community gardens, helping with the elderly.
- **Nature therapy** - find a walking or camping group. Nature is known to have therapeutic and calming properties
- **Volunteer** - helping others is a great way to help yourself feel more connected.
- **Adopt or borrow a pet** - pets are great companions. Walking a dog will also help you meet people and comfort you when alone.
- **Get support** - If loneliness and social isolation are causing you distress, you should discuss your concerns with someone you trust or your GP. CFWA are also available to provide support or ideas around how to connect.

Support

CFWA Events and Connection for Parents and Carers:

- Parents Retreat, Sibling Camp, Ladies High Tea, Parents Dinner
- CF Talk Facebook Page for Parents and Carers

CFWA Events and Connection for People with CF:

- Webinars for adults with CF
- Webinars for mums with CF
- Business coaching for business owners with CF
- CF Talk Facebook Page for Adults with CF

Useful Resources

- [CFWA Factsheets](#)
- [CFWA Upcoming Events](#)
- [Facebook: CFTalk Adults](#)
- [Facebook: CFTalk Parents](#)
- [Meetup \(Find a group in Perth\)](#)
- [Lifeline- Loneliness and isolation](#)
- [How to Fight FOMO \(CF News Today\)](#)

Cystic Fibrosis WA
The Niche
11 Aberdare Road
Nedlands WA 6009

T: +61 8 6457 7333
E: info@cfwa.org.au

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