



Struggling at Christmas: Loneliness

Christmas is a holiday that sees people gathering together to celebrate the festive season. At Christmas we are expected to spend time with the ones we love the most, but what about the times when our experiences don't match up with what we see of other's celebrations? We may also wonder just how much will Covid-19 impact the holiday period?

There are many reasons why you might not be feeling the Christmas spirit this year: it could be worries about Covid, struggles with loneliness, social anxiety, family difficulties or dealing with the loss of a loved one.

These issues can be particularly hard to talk about this time of year, as it may feel like everyone would rather try and enjoy the festivities than listen to someone's problems. This is why it's so important to know you're not alone in any hard times you're experiencing.

If you ever feel you don't know who to talk to over the festive season, Kooth is open on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day with our team of counsellors available for you to talk to. Sometimes it can help just to know you're not alone in what you're feeling!

Each person's relationship with the holidays is slightly different, so here is a breakdown of a few of the struggles you may be dealing with this Christmas.

Coping with Loneliness

Although Christmas campaigns against loneliness are mainly targeted towards the elderly, they are not the only age group affected by social isolation. Increasingly younger people are experiencing isolation and loneliness over the holidays. In light of lockdown restrictions, Christmas in 2020 may be even lonelier for some.

Young people may find it tough at Christmas if they have troubles with their family. Yet a young person's loneliness can equally come from feeling left out or ignored by friends and classmates over the holidays.

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Feeling excluded can be especially hard for anyone who may see others their age posting photos of friends and families celebrating on social media.

If loneliness is affecting you this holiday period, here are a few suggestions on how to cope:

- **Reach out to any of your friends at Christmas.** You may be worried that they won't have as much time for you due to being with their family, but some of the best Christmas memories can come from others extending their family to include a close friend into it. Even if you aren't able to see each other in person, you can ask to arrange phone and video calls.
- **Check out events and activities in your local area.** These can range from carolling to group Christmas walks. Try going to your local community centres and youth groups to see what events are happening in your neighbourhood. Be sure to check details around appropriate social distancing and safety measures.
- **Volunteer this year to help support others at Christmas.** Even if this is done virtually, volunteering can provide lots of social interaction on Christmas Day with other volunteers and the less fortunate people you'll be helping out.

As Christmas is a time of giving, by offering your time to those in a difficult situation you can ease your own loneliness while making the holiday a lot more special for someone else too! For volunteering ideas, see our article on *Helping Others at Christmas* in the Kooth magazine.

If you're really struggling, there is always the option to talk to the Kooth team. Check us out at www.kooth.com.

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