

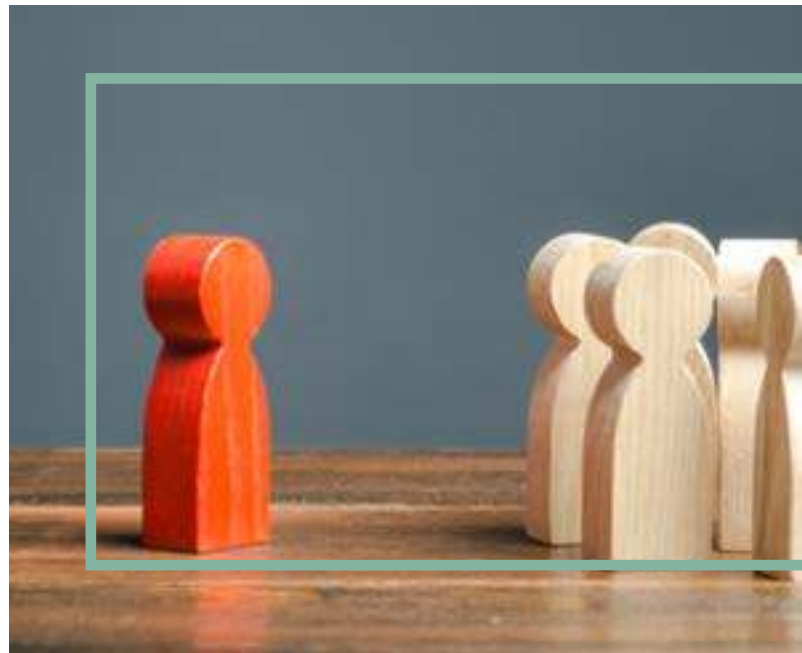
## ACTION SHEET

# AVOIDING LONELINESS WHEN WORKING FROM HOME

In today's world where many of us are working more and more from home, we may forget our basic human need for social connection.

That which came easily to us in an office environment, we may now need to pro-actively develop new routines to encourage.

Research says humans are inherently social creatures; we are biologically, cognitively, physically and spiritually wired to belong. From an evolutionary perspective we were built to compete but also to collaborate within our tribes.



## TWO STUDIES FROM THE JOURNAL NATURE SUGGEST

**1** Being social became a key strength for the primate ancestors of humans when they switched from foraging for food by night to carrying out their activities by day (which rendered them more vulnerable to a wider range of predators).

**2** Early man may have evolved a basic form of language because they needed more advanced communication to share ideas. This, they say, helped our ancestors to develop tools that allowed them to live better and evolve further.

# DEVELOPING SELF AWARENESS

Some of us need greater connection than others. Even the most introverted among us will benefit (happiness wise) from three more social interactions a week (according to researcher Sonja Lyubomirski).

We may change over time, but at our core we may find we are greater:

**EXTROVERTS** People who get their energy from being with other people

**INTROVERTS** People who get their energy from being alone

**AMBIVERTS** People who need a balance of both extrovert and introvert



## WHICH ONE ARE YOU?

Are you an extrovert or an introvert? Find out with a quiz like this:

<https://ideas.ted.com/quiz-are-you-an-extrovert-introvert-or-ambivert/>

## OTHER QUESTIONS TO ASK OURSELVES

- That feeling of emerging anxiety – could it be to do with lack of connection?
- How much connection do you need – are you more introvert/extrovert/ambivert?
- Do you have people in your life to turn to in an emergency e.g. health?
- Do you know who the most important people in your life are?
- Do you hang on to friends because you have known them a long time but they drain your energy?
- How energised/relaxed do you feel after meeting a particular friend?
- Do you lack confidence when it comes to chatting to strangers?
- Do you prefer big groups or small ones/one to one?



## HOW DO I PREVENT LONELINESS?

### DEVELOP CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

- Ask more questions and be more vulnerable
- Trust is built when you are authentic, empathetic and perceived as competent
- You can create the conditions for belonging when you are open and vulnerable as well as when you are empathetic toward others
- Develop listening skills - this signals acceptance and helps ensure the people around you feel safe, by asking questions, listening and demonstrating focused attention.
- Having deep/meaningful conversation leads to greater life satisfaction

### MORE SMALL TALK

Studies show more day-to-day interactions with other people - even sharing a quick smile with a stranger in a coffee shop - are associated with greater feelings of belonging and subjective well-being.

- Be the first to smile or to pay a compliment (with a question at the end). If they don't engage it has nothing to do with you
- Engage with strangers and acquaintances – “the brief, micro interactions we all have on a daily basis – can have amazing benefits as well, with reduced rates of depression.” (Sharp, UT Sydney)
- “Theory of weak ties”, people who have many acquaintances beyond their close networks tend to be happier than those with smaller networks. (Granovetter, 1973)



## SMALL HABIT CHANGES (1% THEORY)

- 1 Say hello to one person on your street every day.
- 2 Make a list of the people you want to be closest to.
- 3 Connect with those you want to be close to regularly and listen well.
- 4 Develop a pre and post work routine which includes going outside (where those chance encounters may also raise your mood!)
- 5 When you perceive yourself to have made a mistake, say nice things to yourself – you did your best/you tried/you learnt something – well done.

**Remember that there is a difference between loneliness and solitude. Being happy with our own company is also a skill to develop! This is an area we can all build competence in and are constantly trying to seek the right balance...**

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Evolution and social connection - Apicella, C., Marlowe, F., Fowler, J. et al. Social networks and cooperation in hunter-gatherers. Nature 481, 497–501 (2012). <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature10736>

Johann Hari in his book “Lost Connections” posits that epidemic of depression may be in part due to loss of human connection

Sonja Lyubomirsky is a primary researchers into happiness and more specifically into human connection creating happiness <http://sonjalyubomirsky.com/>

Theory of weak ties <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200701-why-your-weak-tie-friendships-may-mean-more-than-you-think>

