

Loneliness & 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.

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.

Connection & 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.



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.
- **Do the things you love** – e.g. exercise, art, social clubs or study.
- **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.
- **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 your CF care team or your GP. CFWA are also available to provide support or ideas around how to connect.

CFWA Support

CFWA have a range of support services for adults living with CF as well as parents and other carers. This includes psychosocial support, carer events, support programs and more. Go to our website www.cfw.org.au for more information or call our team on 08 6224 4100.