



# Mental Health Bulletin February 2023



## Friendship and Loneliness

Friends and friendships are great when things are going well, but life can feel pretty miserable and stressful if a young person is struggling to make friends, or when there are arguments and fallings out.

Loneliness is an emotion that many young people may feel from time to time. Loneliness can often arise from a young person feeling dissatisfied with either the quantity or quality of the social connections and relationships they have with others. Loneliness can also result from feeling misunderstood, uncared for by others, or if they are somehow 'different' from their peer group. This means that even if a young person appears to have many friends or people to 'hang out with' inside or outside of school, they may still experience feelings of loneliness.

This is what it might look like if a young person is struggling with feelings of loneliness

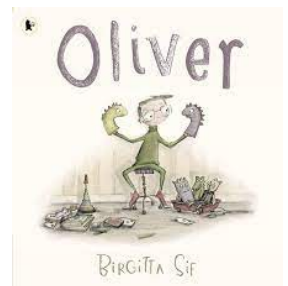
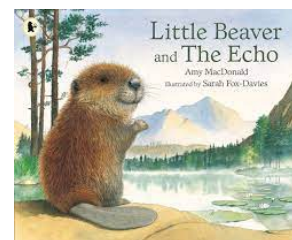
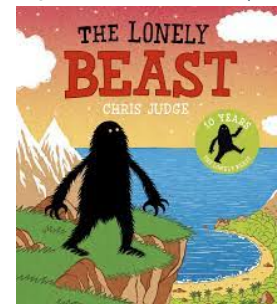
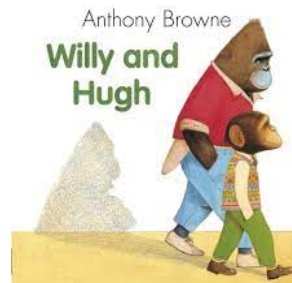
Low self esteem - thinking and believing that they are not good enough. They make statements of worthlessness and hopelessness.

- Appearing uncaring or unbothered about people or activities that they previously would have cared about.
- Shows frequent changes in emotion. More sensitive, appears irritable or upset.
- Withdrawn and uncommunicative; May lead to refusal to leave the house or take part in hobbies, interests or seeing friends.
- Seeks verbal reassurance and checks that things with others are okay.
- Feeling flat, empty, numb, hopeless and helpless.
- Disrupted Sleep. Difficulties getting to or staying asleep. Waking up very early in the morning or over sleeping.
- Changes in appetite or fluid intake. Loss or an increase in consumption of food or drink.
- Physical symptoms including headaches, digestive upset or pain.
- They persistently try to engage with others and seek social contact.

Here are some things that might help a young person who is experiencing difficulties in their friendships or feelings of loneliness.

- Acknowledging and normalising that it is normal to feel a range of emotions.
- Try to keep to normal routines as much as possible.
- Encourage your young person to keep doing activities they enjoy and not avoid social opportunities when they arise.
- If they are finding it hard to talk about how they feel, they might find it easier to write down how they are feeling rather than talk.
- Remind young people, if they are having a bad time it is not their fault and that none ever deserves to be abused or made to feel bad about themselves.
- Encourage young people to practice 'safe social media use'. Block, unfriend, mute or delete anyone or any group that is being unhelpful.
- If social media is a problem, delete apps on their account. Encourage the young person to turn off their phone at night.
- Find hobbies and activities that will boost their self esteem and confidence. Joining new groups or clubs can help them to meet new people and make new friends.
- Finding ways to manage anxiety and stress can be helpful. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5EXpAVw3fh0&t=48s>
- Share concerns with your child's school and teacher to identify if there is any additional pastoral support available.
- Seek guidance, help and support from Young Mind's Parent Helpline 08088025544

Here are some useful books that you might find helpful.



Unfortunately we can't always control the way our child's friendships form and develop and we can't stop the feeling of loneliness. However, we can give our children the right support and encouragement to help them to make positive connections with others. Please come into school and speak to Mrs Allen (Mental Health lead) or Miss Newman (Federation SENDCO) if loneliness has become a problem for someone you know.