

Health matters

Factsheet 12: Loneliness and social isolation

Each day in the UK, 6,000 people become carers and the transition to caring, and particularly to full-time caring, can contribute to a loss of social networks and feelings of isolation and lonely.

The loneliness carers experience is caused by a range of circumstances, many of which they have no control over. Indeed many carers describe feeling 'invisible' as the needs of the person they care for take precedence and their own needs fade into the background.

These feelings can be compounded when carers find themselves having to give up work and manage on a significantly-reduced household budget, at the same time that their relationships are becoming increasingly transactional rather than affirming or sustaining.

We have put together some tips we hope can help you tackle your feelings of loneliness.

- Visit Carers Trust Hillingdon. We are not only a great source of information and advice but we also hold regular carers' events that include carers cafes which can help you meet other carers for friendship and support.
- Keep in touch with friends and family. Try to take time out to call or email people you know, even if it's just a five-minute call.
- Video chat with others - Programs like Skype and most other web chat software have audio and video options where you can voice and video chat to them.
- Join the online community on www.carers.org/help-and-info/chat-to-carers-online You can meet other carers in discussion boards and chatrooms, and write blogs. Whether you are looking for someone who understands you, a good laugh or a place to just vent your feelings, the carers here are extremely supportive of each other.

- Keep doing what you love – take a little time out to keep doing the things you love, whether that's reading, gardening or jogging, looking at art or indeed, anything that makes you happy!
- Take a break - if you don't have any time to do the things you love then you need a break, Carers Trust Hillingdon, your GP or a social worker can help you to find respite opportunities.

Isolation is an objective state measured by the number of contacts and interactions that someone has with others. People who are isolated don't necessarily feel lonely. Loneliness refers to the negative feelings people have about the extent and quality of their social relationships; even people who have many social contacts may feel lonely.

Carers Trust Hillingdon has a range of services that might help you. For more information please contact us on:

Telephone: 01895 811206

Email: office@carerstrusthillingdon.org.uk

Website: www.carerstrusthillingdon.org.uk