START with Hello

EDUCATOR GUIDE FOR GRADES 6-12

#startwithhello #sandyhookpromise
BE A LEADER OF CHANGE.

It's Contagious. SMILE.

START WITH HELLO.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Letter</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start With Hello Overview</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intended Use</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide Outline</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before You Begin</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Guide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - SEE SOMEONE ALONE</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - REACH OUT + HELP</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - START WITH HELLO</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tips for Connected and Inclusive Classroom Discussions</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating With Parents</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix : Resources</td>
<td>22-32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DEAR EDUCATOR,

In every school and in every community, there are young people who suffer silently because they feel left out, alone or invisible. Social isolation is a growing epidemic in the United States and within our schools. In fact, one study reports that chronic loneliness increases our risk of an early death by 14%. Furthermore, young people who are isolated can become victims of bullying, violence, and/or depression. As a result, many pull further away from society, struggle with learning and social development and/or choose to hurt themselves or others.

The Start with Hello program raises awareness and educates students and the community through trainings, advertising, discussion, activities, public proclamations, media events, contests and awards. While this guide is primarily dedicated to the work that you can do in your classroom or youth setting, we have other resources that may be helpful in creating a more robust program in your school and in your community. Please visit www.sandyhookpromise.org for access to additional resources.

This guide’s objective is to assist you in facilitating discussions and ongoing activities to reduce social isolation and create a connected and inclusive classroom, school and community. The guide includes classroom objectives, discussion questions, key messages, activities, extension options and additional resources.

Thank you for your contribution and commitment to Start With Hello. We couldn’t do it without you.

Sincerely,

Mark Barden (Daniel’s Dad) & Nicole Hockley (Dylan’s Mom)
Managing Directors, Sandy Hook Promise
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Start With Hello is the result of a collaborative effort from people of all walks of life – educators, community leaders, social workers, students and parents who know the consequences of social isolation.

We want to acknowledge the extremely valuable input and support we’ve received from educators, who helped ensure that this program has impact, is easy to use and integrate into a school’s activities and truly benefits teens and adolescents.

We also want to thank our many partners, as well as our staff, who helped collaborate and review, donating their time, ideas and resources to help Start With Hello come to life.

ABOUT SANDY HOOK PROMISE

Sandy Hook Promise (SHP) is a national, nonprofit organization based in Newtown, Connecticut. SHP is led by several family members whose loved ones were killed in the tragic mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012. SHP’s sole purpose is to educate and empower parents, schools and community organizations on how to prevent gun violence BEFORE it happens by providing mental health & wellness early-identification and intervention programs, gun safety storage practices and advocating for sensible state and federal violence prevention policy.

For more information about Sandy Hook Promise and our other school and community-based prevention programs and training, please visit www.sandyhookpromise.org. Make the Promise and together we can protect children from preventable gun violence.
OVERVIEW

Start With Hello includes an educator’s guide, student guide, and informative parent brochure, as well as a presentation that can be facilitated in the classroom or at an assembly.

The presentation teaches students the three essential steps to Start With Hello: 1) See Someone Alone, 2) Reach Out and Help, 3) Start with Hello.

The student guide may be used by students in or out of the classroom to take an active role in leading others through the Start With Hello program. This educator’s guide complements the Start With Hello presentation and allows you to continue the conversation or go further within the classroom.

INTENDED USE

We recognize that it can be difficult to fit more instruction into a school day or youth meeting. For that reason, this Educator Guide has been designed to be flexible. For each part of the Educator Guide, there are objectives, discussion questions, key messages, activities, and extension options. Teachers may pick and choose which elements of the guide they would like to use. Each element can stand on its own or be combined to provide more depth to the topic. For example, you could plan to ask just some of the discussion questions listed in each section instead of all. You could also add in an activity or the activity could stand on its own.

Because so much of the guide is built around discussion, there are also several tips and resources for fostering connected and inclusive discussion in the classroom. At the end of the guide, you’ll find an appendix with all of the resources necessary to bring this to life in your classroom.

Though this guide has been written for educators to use in a school environment, the guide and its activities can be easily adapted for use in any community or youth organization.

Educator Guide Objectives

1. Students will examine the importance of reducing social isolation and creating a connected and inclusive classroom and community.

2. Students will engage in activities to reduce social isolation and create a connected and inclusive classroom and community.

3. Students will be empowered to reduce social isolation and create a connected and inclusive classroom and community.

Length of Time

In most cases, the Start With Hello program can be completed in 20-40 minutes. You may decide to break the lesson into several sections to fit with your available time and academic activities. The program has been designed to be easily adaptable and flexible to match your needs.

Grade Levels

This guide is targeted for grades 6-12.
Examines social isolation in our communities. This part of the guide helps students understand social isolation, identify and empathize with those who may feel socially isolated, and recognize the importance of connecting with others who feel socially isolated.

Asks students to consider strategies for connecting with others. This part of the guide also helps students think through complications with outreach, since many students have said that it can feel difficult and awkward to reach out.

Looks at methods students can use to build lasting relationships with others. This part of the guide also reinforces the importance of student leadership in the Start With Hello program.

Social isolation is a difficult topic. At some point in their lives, many students may feel lonely or isolated. Speaking about social isolation may make some students feel anxious or “put on the spot.” It is important that you are prepared for this potential outcome and remain observant of your students’ reactions. It is also important to recognize and validate that occasional “alone time” is healthy and not a cause for concern.

Sometimes, through their social nature, classroom activities can exacerbate the feelings of social isolation. Fortunately, there are things that we can do to help alleviate the pain of social isolation. Towards the end of this guide, there are several tips for modifying classroom discussions, in particular, in order to create an inclusive and connected classroom.

Integrating Start With Hello into your school or community culture is an important life lesson. Activities suggested throughout this guide can help align the program with your curriculum, and satisfy requirements, but the lessons learned about character development, civic responsibility, and empathy for others will help students and adults well outside the range of your classroom.
In this section students will work to understand social isolation, identify and empathize with those who may feel socially isolated, and recognize the importance of connecting with people who feel socially isolated.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND KEY MESSAGES

What is social isolation?

• Social isolation is an individual’s perceived or real separation from a group of peers. It is a feeling that you don’t fit in, that you don’t belong, or that you have been left out. The separation may be the result of a rejection from others, or from the person’s own withdrawal from others. Social isolation can happen in person or online.

• People who are socially isolated may prefer to be alone, may avoid human interaction or keep to themselves, and/or may be anxious or uncomfortable around others.

How do you think it feels to be socially isolated?

• Social isolation can lead to bullying, violence, and/or depression. This leads many to pull away further from society, struggle in the classroom or with making friends, develop physical health issues and/or, in some extreme instances, inflict self-harm or harm others because they can no longer cope.

What is the difference between social isolation and healthy alone time? Why is healthy alone time beneficial?

• There is a difference between social isolation and healthy alone time. Healthy alone time is when you choose to be alone to clear your mind, take a break from “socializing,” give time to focus on and recharge yourself, and/or work through problems or possibilities without any outside influence. In short, healthy alone time is a positive choice.

Who is responsible for social isolation?

• Social isolation is a problem that belongs to everyone. Together we can do something about it. Together we can make a difference.

Why should I care about people who are socially isolated?

• We all live in this world together. As people, one way that we can connect is through empathy. Empathy is our ability to understand and share the feelings of someone else. When we empathize with others who feel socially isolated, we understand and feel their loneliness and withdrawal. By empathizing with others, we can create a connected community.
1 STORIES OF SOCIAL ISOLATION

Classroom Objective:
Students will examine the importance of reducing social isolation by discussing stories and images of peers who have been socially isolated.

Materials Needed:    Stories of Social Isolation

Approximate Time:    20 minutes

Activity Instructions:
1. Distribute one or several of the "Stories of Social Isolation" resources.
2. Ask students to read, watch, or review the assigned story.
3. Ask students to refer to their assigned story as they discuss some or all of the following questions:
   • Based on your story, what are some signs that someone is socially isolated? How do the signs from your story compare to other stories or to the perceptions that you had prior to reading your story?
   • Based on your story, what does it feel like to be socially isolated?
   • Is there a certain group of people that is more socially isolated than others? Why do you say that?
   • Imagine that you know the person/people from your story of social isolation. What is one thing you might do to help?
   • Sometimes, our advice to socially isolated people is that they should try harder to be social, or do more to "put themselves out there." Do you think this is fair advice? When you give advice like this, what role do you play? How could you take a more active role in helping someone who feels socially isolated?
   • How do you think someone who is socially isolated would feel if you tried to make them feel less lonely? Why?
   • You don’t have to help someone who is socially isolated, so why should you?
2 “IN MY SHOES”

Classroom Objective:
Students will analyze empathy and its impact by participating in or discussing scenarios related to social isolation.

Materials Needed: Paper for a journal response / “In My Shoes” activity sheet

Approximate Time: 30 minutes

Activity Instructions:

1. Define empathy as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

2. Ask students to compare the definition of empathy to that of sympathy, which is feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else’s misfortune.

3. Ask students to respond to the following journal prompt. Emphasize to students that their journal responses will not be collected or shared, but that they are meant to help students start to empathize with others. Prompt:

   When you see someone isolated, how does that person feel? Describe a time when you might have felt similarly. If you have never felt this way, imagine a situation that might make you feel this way. Describe that situation and your thoughts and feelings.

4. Group students and distribute the “In My Shoes” scenarios. Ask students to select one scenario and discuss or role play through the questions at the bottom of the page.

5. Debrief the activity with students by asking at least one of the following questions:
   - What are some strategies for empathizing with others?
   - Why should we try to empathize with those who are socially isolated?
   - Do you think empathy is natural or do you think it has to be practiced? Explain.
   - If you think empathy has to be practiced, how can we do that?

EXTENSION OPTIONS:

MATH: Conduct an anonymous poll to collect data about social isolation in your school and community. Consider sharing the collected data, along with analysis, with the school or community.

ENGLISH/SOCIAL STUDIES/HEALTH: Write an argument for why social isolation issues are community issues and not just the problem of the person who is socially isolated. Arguments could take the form of a formal essay, or they could take the form of an advertisement, letter to the editor, or written speech.
In this section students will discuss strategies for connecting with others and brainstorm ways to combat anxiety about reaching out.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND KEY MESSAGES

What are the best ways to connect with someone?

- There are many ways to connect with others. You might simply sit with someone who is sitting alone. Or, you might reach out on social media or write a quick handwritten note. Another option is to invite someone to join you in an activity. Sometimes, even a simple gesture, like a smile or a head nod, helps establish a connection.

- Your school can also facilitate ways to connect with others. The school could host a No One Eats Alone® day or a "Hey Day" where everyone wears a name tag. Students could do an outreach scavenger hunt activity, or a "Get to Know Me" day.

How can I connect with someone if I am feeling awkward or uncomfortable about connecting?

- For many, taking this step can be very hard. Many have said that they just don't know what to do or when to reach out. They want to reach out but don't want to be awkward or make anyone feel the same. While this is a valid feeling, the feelings of withdrawal and separation created by social isolation can have more dire consequences. If you are feeling awkward or uncomfortable about connecting, try a less risky activity for reaching out. That might mean reaching out through social media or writing someone a handwritten note. Even something as simple as a smile can help you connect with someone who is feeling socially isolated.

How can I regularly connect with people who are feeling socially isolated?

- Sometimes, a nice gesture or a quick note is all it takes to make a connection with someone who feels socially isolated. Many more times, however, it is sustained action that can continue the connection with others who feel socially isolated. Sustained action might be as simple as reminding yourself to empathize with and reach out to others, or might be as complex as starting a club at school or an advertising campaign in your community to address social isolation.
ACTIVITIES

1 TOP 5 WAYS TO CONNECT

Classroom Objective:
Students will identify effective methods to interact with peers by brainstorming, discussing, and narrowing down their top five ideas to connect to a socially isolated peer.

Materials Needed:
Paper for a journal response / Chart paper / Markers, crayons, colored pencils for poster creation

Approximate Time:
45 minutes

Activity Instructions:

1. Remind students of previous conversations about social isolation, including how people who are socially isolated feel, what social isolation looks like, and why it is important to empathize with people who are socially isolated.

2. Ask students to individually write a response to the following prompt:
   - Create a list of the top five ways you could connect to a socially isolated peer. Describe each method.

3. In small groups of 3-4, ask students to share their top five strategies. Explain to students that, as a group, they must take their lists and narrow to the group’s top five strategies. So, students must discuss each other’s strategies and make some tough decisions about which ones are the best.

4. Once each group has decided their top five strategies, provide groups with materials to create a poster of the “Top Five Ways to Connect with Others.” Hang the finished products in the classroom or around the school.
ICEBREAKER—HUMAN BINGO

Classroom Objective:
Students will make connections with peers by participating in a classroom bingo game.

Materials Needed: Human Bingo Activity Worksheet / Paper for a journal response

Approximate Time: 15 minutes

Activity Instructions:
1. Distribute the Human Bingo Activity Worksheet to students.
2. Explain that students should travel around the classroom with their Human Bingo Activity Worksheets and look for other students in the classroom who can add their names to their cards.
3. Allow students time to meet one another and collect names.
4. At the end of the activity, ask students to respond to the following journal prompt:
   • What new connections did you make today? How can you continue the connections that you made today, so that no one feels socially isolated?

(Note: awarding a “winner” who finishes first may not be conducive to the goal of this activity – to help students make connections with one another.)

EXTENSION OPTIONS:

ENGLISH/SOCIAL STUDIES/HEALTH:
Watch ‘Be the One’ by Beyond Differences®. (www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvQijSNlgONQ) Practice empathizing with the students who feel isolated in the video. Then, discuss the strategies that different students in the video took to reach out and connect with others.

EXTRACURRICULAR: Create a Human Bingo game that can be conducted school-wide. Encourage students to make connections across grade levels and outside of their traditional group of friends.
3 START WITH HELLO

In this section students will discuss methods to build lasting relationships with others and pledge to help end social isolation and build a connected and inclusive community.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND KEY MESSAGES

What do I say to someone to connect to them? How do I continue a conversation and learn more about a person?

- You could “Start With Hello!” Ask questions, like “What’s your favorite movie?” or “What type of music do you like?” The appendix of this guide includes several icebreakers which may help start a conversation.
- To continue the conversation, ask questions like “Why?” And, make sure you validate the other person by listening and responding to their thoughts.

How can I include someone who is feeling socially isolated?

- Every day, we are involved in a wide range of social activities, from checking in with one another between classes, to sending texts to friends, to classroom activities and afterschool clubs and sports. Some of these activities are easy to include others in, like saying “Hi” in the hallway or texting a friend. Other activities might be more difficult to involve others in, like afterschool clubs or sports. Once you begin to break the ice and learn more, you can invite others to join clubs where you share mutual interests.

Why should I “Start With Hello”?

- When we “Start With Hello,” we are making a difference in someone’s life to help them feel accepted, included and valued. Because social isolation can lead to bullying, violence, and/or depression, when we “Start With Hello,” we are helping to stop someone from possibly hurting themselves or others.

How can I lead others in creating an inclusive and connected school and community?

- There are a multitude of ways to take the lead in creating an inclusive and connected school and community. The best method of leadership is to start with leading by example: see someone who is alone, reach out and help, and “Start With Hello.” You can also engage your school and community in following your lead. One way to do this is by creating an inclusive and connected club. Another way is to plan and implement school-wide events. You can create an advertising campaign to educate others. Or, you can set up inclusion and connectedness tables at events and lunch.
1 CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

Classroom Objective:
Students will practice initiating and sustaining conversations by taking part in a silent discussion.

Materials Needed: Paper for silent discussion

Approximate Time: 15 minutes

Activity Instructions:

1. Ask students to choose a conversation starter prompt from the list:
   - Tell me one thing I don’t know about you.
   - What has been the highlight of your week?
   - What's your favorite restaurant?
   - If you had to pick a character from a movie/TV show/book that is most similar to you, who would you pick? Why?
   - What’s the first thing you do after school?
   - If you could live anywhere in the world, where would you live? Why?

2. Explain to students that they will be having a silent discussion with 1-2 peers about the prompt from the list. One of the challenges of the activity will be sustaining the conversation beyond the first or second responses. Ask students to share a few ways that they can continue conversations, even when it seems like they are running out of things to talk about. (Some suggestions might include asking more questions, sharing similarities or differences, or adding opinions.)

3. Direct students to pass their silent discussion paper to the next person in their group. The next person in the group should respond as though they are having a real conversation. Then, he/she should pass the silent discussion paper back for a response. Remind students to use some of the tips from their brainstorming in #2 in their silent discussions. Provide enough time for students to go back and forth in silent discussion several times so that they can get real practice in sustaining a conversation.
2. After the activity, reflect using some or all of the questions below:

- What strategies did you use to sustain conversation in your silent discussion?
- How is this silent discussion different from a real life discussion?
- What lessons can you apply from the silent discussion into a real life discussion?
- Why should we learn to sustain or continue conversations with one another?
- How can holding conversations with others help to create an inclusive and connected classroom and community?

2. A PLAN TO “START WITH HELLO”

**Classroom Objective:**
Students will empower themselves to solve social isolation problems by developing a plan for going through the “Start With Hello” process for reducing social isolation and creating a connected and inclusive community.

**Materials Needed:** Cut out scenarios from “In My Shoes” activity worksheet / “Start With Hello” Plan activity worksheet

**Approximate Time:** 30 minutes

**Activity Instructions:**

1. Pair students and provide each team with one of the scenarios from the “In My Shoes” activity worksheet.

2. Using the “Start With Hello” Plan activity worksheet, ask students to consider and respond to the three prompts on the worksheet. (Note: one modification is to allow one student in the group to write responses, while the other student in the group can draw illustrations of the responses.)

3. When teams have finished, ask them to share their responses either to the entire class or to another team.
3 WHY I “START WITH HELLO”

Classroom Objective:
Students will empower themselves to improve their community by making a pledge to help end social isolation and build a connected and inclusive community.

Materials Needed: “Start With Hello” Selfie Cards

Approximate Time: 15 minutes

Activity Instructions:

1. Distribute a “Start With Hello” Selfie Card to each student.

2. Review some of the important discussion questions and key messages learned during the Start With Hello program. This should include reviewing how people who are socially isolated feel, why we should empathize with people who are socially isolated, how to reach out and connect, and how to continue conversations.

3. Ask students to generate some ideas that could answer the prompt on the Selfie Card: “Why I ‘Start With Hello’: ______.” (Some examples may include: “to help others,” “so that no one feels left out,” or “because I am a leader in my community.”) Once students have generated a few ideas, ask them to share with peers and get feedback so that they can narrow down to one idea.

4. Allow each student time to write their final idea on their Selfie Card.

5. Then, ask students to share their Selfie Card with a small group or with the class. Take pictures of students with the cards and post around the school or on your school’s social media using the hashtags #startwithhello and #sandyhookpromise

EXTENSION OPTIONS:

ENGLISH/SOCIAL STUDIES/HEALTH/ART: Create a Start With Hello campaign to empower peers to solve social isolation problems. Create an advertising campaign to help others go through the “Start With Hello” process for reducing social isolation and creating a connected and inclusive community. Distribute campaign materials around the school and in the community.

EXTRACURRICULAR: Implement a Pen Pal program at the school, where students can be paired with another school peer who they can get to know through letter exchange.
TIPS FOR CONNECTED AND INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS

Much of the Start With Hello program involves group discussion and collaborative learning. While these are excellent teaching techniques, at times they can exacerbate some of the very issues addressed in this program, including social isolation and classroom inclusiveness. Below are several tips for ensuring that your classroom discussions are connected and inclusive.

1. Include all students.

Sometimes, class discussions further isolate students who feel that they do not belong. However, class discussions are an excellent teaching technique to allow peers to collaborate and dive deep into a topic. To ensure that all students are involved in classroom discussion, try one or more of these options:

- **Create smaller groups.** Rather than a whole class discussion, where each speaker is “on stage” in front of the class, create smaller groups so that students have more privacy in a conversation. Some options for small group discussion include think-pair-share, elbow partners, and station discussion groups.

- **Create and strategically assign roles.** Giving students a specific role and responsibility in group discussion helps keep everyone involved and active. Roles may include time keeper, question asker, note taker, illustrator, discussion extender, and more. Think about student strengths and weaknesses and use roles to push individuals out of their comfort zone. For example, a more quiet student could practice speaking up as the “discussion extender” while a more vocal student could practice listening as the “note taker.”

- **Allow for alternate discussion methods.** Some students may still feel uncomfortable speaking in discussions. Create options so that these students can still share their thoughts during or after the discussion. One option is to use an electronic message board and computer or personal device so that students can type and post their thoughts during or after the discussion. Another option is to use a graphic organizer to allow students to write their thoughts during discussion. You can also give students “thinking time” after asking questions before you jump to accepting responses. This can give more introverted students a chance to collect their thoughts and keep the same students from dominating conversation.
2. **Discuss topics that matter to students.**
   One of the primary goals of Start With Hello is to create a connected classroom. In order to do that, not only do students need to feel connected to one another, but they also need to feel connected to the content of the classroom. With that in mind, occasionally gauge student interest in discussion topics and modify questions as needed. Additionally, in order to connect the topics to students, teachers may need to take some extra steps prior to discussion in order to access prior knowledge.

3. **Create discussion norms.**
   Discussion norms are ground rules for conversation. Because so many of the topics discussed in Start With Hello deeply impact our students’ lives, it is important to make sure that all of our students feel comfortable engaging in conversation. Discussion norms may include a *class-created set of rules for healthy conversation*, plus some helpful tips and *accountable talk sentence frames* for engaging in conversation.

4. **Pair/group strategically.**
   In creating smaller groups for classroom discussion, teachers should consider student relationships and student leadership. It may take time to create meaningful discussion between students who do not already have an existing positive relationship. As you create student groupings, aim to find the slightly uncomfortable middle ground that allows for students to build relationships with one another without cutting off conversation or isolating a student. Additionally, use student leadership to your benefit in pairing shy students with those who are more outspoken.

5. **Plan for and recognize growth.**
   While some students naturally thrive in a classroom discussion, others have much room for growth. Provide students with feedback on improving their discussion skills, allow students to reflect on their own discussion skills, and help students set goals to improve their discussion skills.

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**COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS**

Young adults aren’t the only people who deal with social isolation. Adults may feel socially isolated or know someone else who feels socially isolated.

Adults, particularly parents, have an important role in this, both by modeling appropriate behavior and being the trusted adult their child needs, but also in keeping an eye on their own child’s social interactions.

We recommend sending the trifold pamphlet included in the Start With Hello resources to all parents, either before or after presenting Start With Hello where you live. This allows them to keep the conversation active within their family. It also helps them to understand the need to support and validate their child as they participate in Start With Hello.
Thank You
FOR MAKING
A DIFFERENCE!
APPENDIX

Resource #1

STORIES OF SOCIAL ISOLATION

FEELING LONELY IN A NEW CITY

Over the winter I moved from New York City to Portland, Oregon. The reasons for my move were purely logical. New York was expensive and stressful. Portland, I reasoned, would offer me the space and time to do my work.

Upon arriving, I rented a house and happily went out in search of “my people.” I went to parks, bookstores, bars, on dates. I even tried golfing. It wasn’t that I didn’t meet people. I did. I just felt no connection to any of them.

Once social and upbeat, I became morose and mildly paranoid. I knew I needed to connect to people to feel better, but I felt as though I physically could not handle any more empty interactions. I woke up in the night panicked. In the afternoon, loneliness came in waves like a fever. I had no idea how to fix it.

About a decade ago, my mom was going through a divorce from my step-father. Lonely and desperate for connection, she called a cousin she hadn’t talked to in several years. On the phone, her cousin was derisive: “Don’t you have any friends?”

While dealing with my own loneliness in Portland I often found myself thinking, “If I were a better person I wouldn’t be lonely.”

Most of us know what it is like to be lonely in a room full of people, which is the same reason even a celebrity can be deeply lonely. You could be surrounded by hundreds of adoring fans, but if there is no one you can rely on, no one who knows you, you will feel isolated.

Both Denmark and Great Britain are devoting more time and energy to finding solutions and staging interventions for lonely people, particularly the elderly.

Even though the Internet has possibly contributed to our isolation, it might hold a key to fixing it. Cacioppo is excited by online dating statistics showing that couples who found each other online and stayed together shared more of a connection and were less likely to divorce than couples who met offline. If these statistics hold up, it would stand to reason friendships could also be found in this way, easing those whose instincts tell them to stay on the periphery back into the world with common bonds forged over the Internet.


Adapted from http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/medical_examiner/2013/08/dangers_of_loneliness_social_isolation_is_deadlier_than_obesity.html

by Jessica Olien
STORIES OF SOCIAL ISOLATION

Resource #2: 

Resource #3:  “What It’s Like to Feel Lonely” by BuzzfeedYellow
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjRRrG8Vr6I
RAHELA'S STORY OF A LONELY FIRST YEAR IN AMERICA

Rahela spent her junior and senior years of high school studying in Vermont, and is now starting at an American college. She shared this story about her first year in the U.S. which held more than its fair share of disappointments.

The United States is a multi-cultural country that is famous as a melting pot. This country has many international students who came from different countries around the world. Some international students can't get close to American students easily, and have a difficult time making American friends. I was one of those students.

I spent my junior and senior years of high school in the U.S. and had a hard time finding an American friend. I think one of the main reasons was my language. This problem is common in the first year of being international student in a foreign country.

It was hard to share my feelings and experiences with other students. Sometimes I was afraid I would use improper or unrelated words in my conversation that would embarrass me.

I remember one day I went to a doctor for an examination. The doctor said, "Ok! Now you're here." I thought that she said, "Ok! Now your hair," and I immediately took off my head scarf. The doctor looked at me strangely and smiled. She realized that I misunderstood and said "No! No! I mean you are in our building, in the hospital now. You are here." I was a little bit embarrassed, but was pleased that she behaved kindly and tried to understand me.

Language is like an ocean – the learners need to swim in it in order to learn. I really wanted to improve my language by finding an American friend.

My religion was another thing that limited my relationships with students. As a Muslim female, I wear a scarf and have certain beliefs, and this created differences with my classmates. I could not be friendly with males and could not shake their hands.

Friendship has a different definition in American culture comparing to Afghan culture. People in the U.S. usually feel more comfortable making relationships with the opposite sex. In my school students were friendly with their teachers; they shake hands and do high fives, which makes a closer relationship. Also the girls in my class did not speak a lot with me, which I felt was partly because of the way I dress.

I had a stressful and hard time in my first year of being in the U.S. I felt lonely because I could not make a friendship, but I was fortunate my teachers played their role as a good friend in my life. It is not impossible to make an American friend, but it is difficult. International students could get close with other international students easier than with Americans. They felt that they could make a better connection with each other.

FEELING LONELY

Whether it’s all the time or just every once in a while, it’s no fun to feel like you’re alone. But it’s also totally normal, and lots of kids feel lonely. Read the quotes below from other middle and high school students who feel lonely.

“I feel really awkward around other kids that I’m not really close to, especially kids who are older than me. I just get so weird! I don’t know what to do with my hands, and I don’t know what to say, I don’t even know what to look at. I’m not really a shy person. In fact, I’m really outgoing with some people.”

“I’m starting middle school next year and I don’t know if there’s anyone who shares my interests from other schools. I’m worried that I won’t be able to make friends without changing who I am.”

“I just moved from China. I know English because I was taught it at my Chinese school, but I don’t like my new school. No one is Chinese and I feel like an outcast.”

“See, the thing is, I’ve got plenty of friends, but occasionally I feel this gnawing despair as though I am totally alone and weird and rotten, and the only reason anyone likes me is because they know nothing about the true me. It’s not bad enough to get suicidal, but it is bad enough to make me cry, especially at night.”

“I like to study, but I don’t feel like going to school sometimes because I have no close friends in the school. I feel lonely. I believe this relates to my language problem. I am not a native English speaker, so I have an accent. Sometimes, I have trouble expressing myself. I’ve struggled to improve my English; however, it doesn’t seem to change that much. People still don’t talk to me. I’m actually very talkative. I had a lot of friends when I was in my country.”

“I am not very social and I need to get more friends. But I just don’t have the courage to do so.”

“I feel alone in the world. Like, even though I have a family and I have friends, I still feel like I can’t trust anyone. I am just so confused…”

Adapted from: http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/advice/feeling_lonely2.html
**Activity Worksheet**

**“IN MY SHOES”** Select an “In My Shoes” scenario from the options below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have a lot of friends, but I still feel lonely. My friends don’t always include me in their activities, and when they do, I still don’t really feel like I’m having a good time. I think that maybe my friends are friends with me just because we have known each other for a long time. They don’t seem interested in me or the things that I’m interested in. It’s almost like they feel sorry for me.</th>
<th>I just moved here. I used to have a lot of friends, but it’s been a few months and I haven’t made any friends beyond the kids that I get paired with for school assignments. I know that I have similar interests with some of the other kids in school, but I just can’t seem to figure out what to say to start a conversation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English isn’t my first language. I’m still learning how to speak it properly. Sometimes, when people talk to me, it takes me a while to figure out what they’re saying. I think that this could have something to do with the fact that I don’t have many friends at my school. But, I can’t learn to speak or listen to English any better if I don’t have a chance to form friendships with other kids in my school.</td>
<td>I’m always alone. Always. I take the bus to school by myself. I wait outside of my classes by myself. When the teacher asks us to pair up, I’m always paired with the other kid who can’t find a partner. At lunch, I usually go to my favorite teacher’s classroom, where I eat and use the computer. I would eat in the cafeteria, but I don’t have anyone to eat lunch with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every time I look at social media, it seems like everyone around me is having a good time. They’ll post pictures of fun activities they did over the weekend, or they’ll post inside jokes that I don’t understand. In school, the same kids are pretty nice to me, but when I look at social media I just feel so excluded from everything.</td>
<td>I don’t mind being alone. Really, I don’t. I hate working in groups at school. The fact is, I can probably do a better job on an assignment working by myself than working with someone else. And I don’t mind reading a book in the cafeteria while everyone else around me talks to their friends. But, I wouldn’t mind having someone to talk to, someone I could confide in, someone my age who I can trust.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Role Play Option**

1. Choose roles. Someone should play the student in the scenario and at least one other person should play the role of someone who empathizes.
2. Act out a conversation, stressing the importance of empathizing, or understanding and sharing the feelings of someone else.
3. After your scenario, discuss some strategies for empathizing with others during conversation.

**Discussion Option**

1. Read through the scenario.
2. Discuss
   - What is this student feeling? (Some feelings might be directly stated while others must be inferred.)
   - What does it mean to feel like this?
   - What strategies can you use to empathize with this person, or understand and share their feelings?
## HUMAN BINGO

**DIRECTIONS:** Walk around the class and find someone who can fill in each box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>O</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prefers using pencil to pen:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Recently had a birthday:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Has traveled outside of the USA:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Plays an instrument:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Has a pet:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Place:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pet’s Name:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Was born in the same state as you:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Has the same favorite food as you:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Belongs to an after school club:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Saw _______ in concert:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Favorite subject is:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Food:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Club:</strong></td>
<td><strong>_______</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Has a family member who was not born in the USA:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Favorite color is:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Has been to a very small town:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Has been to a wedding:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Collects:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>_______</strong></td>
<td><strong>FREE!</strong></td>
<td><strong>Town:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enjoys reading:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Plays a sport:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Is good at video games:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Is a collector:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Can say “Hello” in 3 other languages:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Sport:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Collects:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Has a younger brother:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Can speak another language:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Can name four songs by the same artist:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Has an older sister:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Has been to a large city:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>_______</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>City:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resource #8

ACTIVITY WORKSHEET

“START WITH HELLO” PLAN

SEE SOMEONE ALONE  How does this socially isolated student feel?

REACH OUT AND HELP  What can you do or say to reach out and connect?

START WITH HELLO  How can you make this student feel less isolated?
WHY I “START WITH HELLO”

MY SELFIE CARD:
DISCUSSION ROLES

Below are some possible discussion roles that you could assign to students during a discussion. Assign the roles strategically based on students’ abilities, interests, and/or areas for growth.

- **Facilitator / Encourager**:
  This student gets discussion moving and keeps it moving, often by asking the other group members questions, sometimes about what they’ve been saying.

- **Timekeeper**:
  This student makes sure that the group stays on track and gets through a reasonable amount of material in the given time period.

- **Summarizer**:
  Every so often (perhaps once per question for a list of questions, or at the end for one question), this student provides a summary of the discussion for other students to approve or amend.

- **Reflector**:
  This student will listen to what others say and explain it back in his or her own words, asking the original speaker if the interpretation is correct.

- **Elaborator**:
  This person seeks connections between the current discussion and past topics or overall course themes.

- **Devil’s Advocate**:
  This person takes an opposing point of view, or proposes a worst case scenario. This person should challenge the norm within the conversation to help clarify reasoning.

Adapted from: http://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/cooperative/roles.html
Below you'll find some sample discussion norms. Setting rules for a discussion helps everyone in the room know expectations.

**Sample Norms #1**

1. Think before you speak.
2. Listen carefully to what others have to say.
3. Do not interrupt when someone else is speaking.
4. Make use of what others have to say when it is your turn to speak.
5. Only say what you truly believe.
6. Do not remain silent. Make sure to contribute to the discussion.
7. Let other people speak. Do not hog the discussion. Once you are done speaking, let at least two other people talk before you speak again.
8. Support good ideas that other people have, even if they are different from your own.
9. Search for the best solution even if it is different from the way that you thought at first.


**Sample Norms #2**

1. Listen actively – respect others when they are talking.
2. Speak from your own experience instead of generalizing (“I” instead of “they,” “we,” and “you”).
3. Do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks -- focus on ideas.
4. Participate to the fullest of your ability -- community growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice.
5. Instead of invalidating somebody else’s story with your own spin on her or his experience, share your own story and experience.
6. The goal is not to agree -- it is to gain a deeper understanding.
7. Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses – they can be as disrespectful as words.

From: http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/groundrules.html
### ACCOUNTABLE TALK

Accountable talk governs the norms of academic discourse and requires that students ask for and furnish evidence to support their statements (Michaels, O’Conner, Hall, & Resnick, 2002). This ensures rigor and moves the conversation from task-oriented to concept-oriented learning. In a classroom filled with accountable talk, students ask one another about their thinking and build on the responses of others. They cite evidence, ask for elaborations and clarifications, and extend understandings by using the statements they have heard from their classmates to form new ideas.

#### REMEMBER TO...  

| **Ask questions when you don’t understand a topic.** | **Can you tell me more?**  
Would you say that again?  
Can you give me another example so I can understand? |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| **Give a reason why your idea is a good one.**      | **This reminds me of_________________________**  
because_________________.  
I believe this is true because_________________. |
| **Ask for evidence when something sounds incorrect.** | **I’m not sure that’s right. Can you tell me why you think it is true?**  
Can you show me a place in the book that illustrates that idea? |
| **Give evidence to support your statements.**       | **Read a passage from the book that illustrates your idea.**  
Bring another information source to support your idea. |
| **Use ideas from others to add to your own.**       | **I agree with________________ because_________________.**  
_________’s idea reminds me of_________. |

*From: http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/108035/chapters/Procedures-for-Classroom-Talk.aspx*
START with Hello

START with Hello

START with Hello

START with Hello

START with Hello

START with Hello

START with Hello

START with Hello

START with Hello

SMILE

SMILE

SMILE

SMILE

BE A LEADER OF CHANGE

BE A LEADER OF CHANGE

BE A LEADER OF CHANGE

BE A LEADER OF CHANGE