

What helps you feel included? A study with  
people with intellectual disability talking  
about loneliness and feeling included  
Guide to Easy Read findings report

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The report is for Our Voice SA, Purple Orange, and Flinders University.

Please read the findings 'What helps you feel included? A study with people with intellectual disability talking about loneliness and feeling included' with this guide.

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## Talking about loneliness and what helps to feel included

This guide is for reading alongside the report - 'What helps you feel included? A study with people with intellectual disability talking about loneliness'. It provides additional information about the study and is designed to be read together if needed.

### Our study

We asked 17 people with intellectual disability to tell us about loneliness and feeling included. They also told us about what helps them to feel better, and any advice they had for helping other people who might feel lonely.

We worked with an advisory group, three people with intellectual disability, to find out how we should do our study. They told us to use pictures, to ask about hard things first and good things second.

When we finished our study, we went back to the advisory group to tell them what we found out. We asked them what they thought and if we had missed anything they thought was important.

In our study we asked:

- What happens when people feel lonely and what effects their feelings and situation?
- What advice do people with intellectual disability have about supporting people who feel lonely?

### Background

Loneliness is when someone feels they don't have any meaningful interactions (positive/kind interactions and relationships) in their lives.<sup>1</sup> In our study we call them connections.

Other researchers have written about loneliness. We use their ideas to help us understand what people told us. We talk about four areas that are important when and where we make connections.

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<sup>1</sup> Wigfield, A., Turner, R., Alden, S., Green, M., & Karania, V. (2020). Developing a new conceptual framework of meaningful interaction for understanding social isolation and loneliness. *Social Policy and Society*.

- **contacts** – talking with other people, meeting with other people, not organised but casual – like talking to the bus driver or people at the café.
- **activities** – doing things – like going to groups, self-advocacy, hobbies, going to work.
- **safety** – feeling safe where we are, and safe to do things we want.
- **people's attitudes** – how we feel and behave towards other people and how they feel and behave towards us – positive or negative, kind, helpful or unkind.

The researchers said that feeling lonely can be affected by who we are, our circumstances, health, and place. Things like:

- personality – if we are shy or quiet, or outgoing and loud, sporty or if we have things we enjoy, such as hobbies, work or social activities.
- our circumstances – where we live, if we have enough money, and if we can we do the things we want to do.
- health – any things that change or impact what we can do.
- geography - where we live or can go – for example, if there are things we need near home, like public transport or hospitals or schools.

Loneliness is also affected by things that happen sometimes. These are things like:

- a good friend or family member or pet dying or moving away
- moving to a new house
- changing jobs
- changes in health
- other changes that affect our lives and that we have to get used to.

From our research we also think feeling lonely or feeling included is affected by rules and systems outside our control.

- **attitudes** of the system toward people with intellectual disability – being friendly, listening, welcoming, respect, inclusion
- **rules and structures** – when people don't get proper support
- **accessibility** – it is important to make places 'disability ready', including proactive support to make sure people can take part in things they want to do. Accessible information and locations.
- **equality** – all people should be treated as equals.