

# WHAT IS LONELINESS?



Loneliness is a feeling of isolation or separation from other people. Whether we are physically alone or not, loneliness is a common feeling that there is no one around who truly understands and supports us.

Many LGBTQ+ people experience isolation due to **victimization** (bullying, abuse, discrimination) based on our identities, **social withdrawal** due to feelings or experiences of difference, **lack of support** for our identity or relationships, or not knowing other people of LGBTQ+ experience. Loneliness can lead to **depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation**, and other mental, emotional, and physical symptoms.

These experiences can be especially pronounced for people in remote areas with little access to transportation, as well as people who hold more than one minority identity.

## CONTACT CHAI

[chai-mi.org](http://chai-mi.org)

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Community Health  
Access Initiative



RESILIENCE +  
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MICHIGAN MEDICINE  
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Paid for by Community Health Services.

# SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ FRIENDS & FAMILY WITH *Loneliness*



# NOT ALL LGBTQ+ PEOPLE ARE LONELY. DON'T ASSUME - ASK.

## If someone is feeling lonely, take the time to:

**Affirm their identity** / identities and expression by using the correct name, pronouns, and terms. Support exploration and conversation about their identities if they want someone to talk to. If you feel unprepared, check out the resources at [genderpectrum.org](http://genderpectrum.org), [familyproject.sfsu.edu](http://familyproject.sfsu.edu), [amaze.org](http://amaze.org), and [PFLAG.org](http://PFLAG.org).

**Advocate together** for positive, affirming change in school and community spaces where they are experiencing exclusion, discomfort, or harm. That could include:

- Training for administration and staff on LGBTQ+ affirmation
- Anti-bullying campaigns
- Pro-LGBTQ+ campaigns and celebrations
- Policy changes if LGBTQ partners or transgender students are discriminated against

**Co-create hopeful visions of the future** by talking about the bright opportunities and experiences that they can look forward to. Help to make those visions a reality by finding people and places that will support them in getting there.

**Connect in real life** over shared interests. LGBTQ+ people also want to do things not related to their identity: play games, go to movies, listen to music, dance-- whatever they love. Spending time not focused on sexual orientation or gender and being treated like any other friend can also help with isolation, so long as expression of their identity is not being silenced.

**Support or create spaces where LGBTQ+ people can build community** safely. Your friend is not alone in their identity, they just need spaces where they can safely experience that with other people of LGBTQ+ experience. If such a place doesn't exist, check out the **GLSEN Safe Space Kit** ([GLSEN.org](http://GLSEN.org)) or [advocatesforyouth.org](http://advocatesforyouth.org)

# SUPPORT FROM A COUNSELOR

**Friends and family sometimes make mistakes that unintentionally cause harm**, especially when first finding out someone identifies as LGBTQ+. A therapist or counselor can help to:

**Repair relationships** that have suffered or need to change.

**Develop support strategies** when your loved one is victimized, bullied, or harmed.

**Developing ways to cope with change.**

**Reflecting on internalized bias** that you may continue to struggle with and want to understand better.

