



/guide

Your questions answered

HOW TO OVERCOME LONELINESS AFTER DIVORCE OR A BREAK-UP

The purpose of this Stowe guide is to offer support for anyone worried about, or experiencing, loneliness following divorce or separation.

Anyone can experience loneliness. Whether alone or when in company, we each have different reasons for feeling lonely. However, if chronic or long-term loneliness is left unresolved it can begin to impact on our mental health.

Divorce or separation means letting go of some areas of your life that are no longer right for you and brings inevitable change. This can cause a blend of feelings including loneliness.

What causes loneliness after divorce?

- Separation from your children - the end of a relationship often means separation not only from your ex-partner, but from your children while they spend time with their other parent. In a relatively short space of time, you can go from living all together and seeing each other daily, to spending longer than you're used to without your kids.

- Testing relationships - break-ups can impact your friendships and relationships with family members, especially those with a connection to your ex. The dynamics of your relationship may change, or in some cases you may lose contact altogether.
- A new place to call home - separation commonly means changing where you live. Moving to a different area, a new home, and perhaps living alone for the first time can lead to feeling isolated, a feeling that can be heightened if you also work from home.
- Occasionally lonely - you may no longer be able to share events and holidays that you'd once have celebrated with your ex-partner or family, which can lead to feeling alone.

Divorce and separation are undoubtedly difficult, but there are ways you can help to prepare yourself for feelings of loneliness and find the right balance for you.

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Ways to overcome loneliness after a divorce or a break-up

Resurrecting hobbies

Are there things that you love to do that have been on the backburner? Or is there something that you've always wanted to do that's remained on the 'one day' list until now? Whether it's training for a triathlon, signing up to a painting course, or downloading that language app, now is the time to rekindle your interests and make time for them.

Investing in you

Self-care is the foundation of your wellbeing and even mini acts of selfcare can make a difference when life has been difficult. In addition to relaxing habits like listening to your audio book while you take a luxurious bath, there's a less exciting but equally beneficial end of the selfcare spectrum. For example, booking the dentist appointment that you've been putting off, ensuring that you eat and sleep well, and checking in with your finances. Taking time each day to look after yourself and do something that's just for you will pay dividends.

Create a new routine

The end of a relationship can significantly change your daily routine, from work patterns and meal times to bedtimes, school runs and more. If losing this rhythm makes you feel disorientated, try creating a new and improved routine that includes the things you have to do, but also forms new beneficial habits and incorporates the things that you like to do.

Reconnecting with friends

Having a good network of friends can be an invaluable support during a break-up and a tonic when you're feeling low. Now is a good time to re-evaluate your friendships. Consider who you feel happiest around and make plans to see them more, reconnect with friends that you value but haven't seen enough of, and think about gently disconnecting from any that aren't able to meet you where you are. You deserve to be loved and valued, so focus on building quality relationships and strengthening bonds with friends to help combat loneliness.

Stop comparing

If you're feeling low about your break-up, seeing others in their seemingly perfect relationship can highlight your sense of loneliness. While we know comparison is the thief of joy, it can be difficult to stop comparing yourself to others and even

being hard on yourself about your split. Remember, what you see is just the tip of the iceberg, the reality is that you may end up setting unrealistic expectations for yourself based on an edited snapshot of others' relationships. Far better to focus on your own happiness.

Get to know your triggers

Learning what triggers you will help you to avoid increased feelings of loneliness or isolation. Perhaps social media or doomscrolling leave you feeling negative. Maybe you don't look forward to going home to an empty house or you'd like to eat out or go to the cinema by yourself without feeling self-conscious. Identify one thing that will improve the scenario that triggers you the most and make the change. Once you've made that step, consider what you can do next and keep going. It's unrealistic to expect that you'll adapt in one go but taking things a step at a time and gradually steering your life in a happier direction will make a difference.

Stay in touch

Agree how and when you'll communicate with your children when you're apart, taking into consideration their age and the length of time that you're apart. You might set up a regular phone or video call, or create a family WhatsApp group to keep in touch while you're apart. For some, an ad hoc basis works best and means children know they can contact you whenever they like. Remember that they may feel guilty or responsible for you being on your own so be mindful to calm any concerns.

Makes plans for the future

Loneliness can leave you feeling locked in the present. By taking control and shaping your own future, you can create a life that you truly enjoy. Whether you arrange a walk with a friend, sign up for an event, or plan a holiday, having something to look forward to can boost your mood. Arranging occasions with friends and family is important, but also consider making plans to do things alone if this isn't something you'd usually do, to build on your independence and self-confidence.

Reach out

While for some loneliness is a typical part of the process of recovering from divorce, it's important not to ignore the way you feel. Long-term loneliness can impact on your mental health so if your sense of loneliness doesn't improve, we recommend that you speak with trusted loved ones or seek help.

Need more information?

Call our Client Care Team on **0330 838 7456** to speak with one of our specialist family lawyers or visit www.stowefamilylaw.co.uk

Ref: 211/1122