



Solution By Inclusion

An Educator's Manual to LINK Rituals

3. LONELINESS

Developed by RVTS Sør in co-creation with students, parents and educators from GEM16+ (Malta), IAL FVG (Italy), Tradium (Denmark) and project partners under the Erasmus+ co-funded Solution By Inclusion Project, 2020-2023

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Foreword

This Educator's Manual contain guidance, skills and competencies for educators based on co-produced project results generated from the Erasmus+ project, Solution By Inclusion (WP. 5); with project partner RVTS Sør as responsible for Work Package 5. in the project.

LINK - Life mastery in Norwegian classrooms - An Introduction for Teachers

“LONELINESS”

Prior to birth our lives are woven together with others. All through life we make new bonds to people, while others are torn apart. Everybody needs good relations, we want love and strong bonds to those who are important to us. Stable and strong relations offer protection also against challenges to come. They create trust and confidence in other people.

The bad feeling of loneliness is part of our system of belonging, which contributes to seeking community with others. We need the group to survive. We can feel it physically when we are in danger of being isolated. To be lonely influences both our mind, our physical health and lifetime. To feel lonely can be compared to being hungry because you have not eaten. It signals the need for social contact. It reminds us that we cannot manage alone.

The feeling of loneliness can be short, like a signal telling you to make contact. It can be situation dependant, such as moving houses, a break or quitting an athletic club. It can also be chronic, that over some time you lack belonging. One can divide our relations into intimate relations, friendships and collective belonging. Even though you have several relations (f.exa. friendships) you can still feel a void in life, a different loneliness. (f.exa. an intimate relation).

“Loneliness is a bad feeling caused by a breach between the social contact you have with others and the contact you want”

Why is loneliness so painful? Feeling of loneliness tells you how little value you have in the bigger picture. Loneliness is a social pain, and this pain becomes especially hard and shameful when it is socially visible. To be lonely is to fail creating needed relation to one or several others. The lonely one is in no position to confirm his/her value as a person. The lonely person is someone who wants but lacks a relation to other people.

According to various research programs the ones who feel often or very often lonely, do not express that they spend more time alone. In consequence, it is not a question of how many people you mingle with, but whether the relations are felt to be meaningful and satisfy the need for contact.

Some people can therefore feel lonely in spite of having many friends. Also, some do not feel lonely, even though they merely stay inside reading books or playing computer games.

TO FEEL LONELY AND TO BE ALONE ARE TWO DIFFERENT THINGS

Some like to have time on their own. As long as they have the possibility to be with others and have friends, time on your own can be preferable, and not a problem. We, the grown-ups, do sometimes worry about children and youngsters when they spend much time on their own. Sometimes with reason, other times unnecessary. Much development takes place growing up, and time on your own can be important and healthful in this process.

We all need the ability to self sufficiency, to be present in ourselves. We need to love ourselves. To be alone can also protect against loneliness, since we have the possibility to be ourselves, look into ourselves and represent ourselves. But self sufficiency will never be total, and for the good loneliness to be good. there also has to be a way back to the others. It is important to be able to be yourself when you spend time with others.

“You do not need to change who you are; belonging is to be yourself”

Brené Brown

“You are only free when you realize you belong no place - you belong every place-no place at all. The price is high. The reward is great”

Maya Angelou

There are many myths about loneliness. A Norwegian study of living conditions shows that there is no increase in the widespread of loneliness. Besides, Norway is among the countries with the lowest spread of loneliness. Some groups are overrepresented in the statistics: immigrants, disabled, young and elderly. The difference between various groups in Norway is smaller than in most other countries, and Norwegian elderly are probably the less lonely on the planet. There is little difference between big and small towns in Norway, but the numbers of lonely people is somewhat lower in the bigger towns. Lower secondary pupils have been asked about loneliness. In 2018, 22% answered that they were much or very much troubled (2011, 16% the same result). Most children can feel lonely from time to time. Something else is to feel lonely the whole time. Still, there is reason to worry about those who really feel that they are lonely, due to the major consequences of life quality and health.

Children who learn and think differently are more vulnerable to feeling lonely and might have problems getting friends. They have a bigger risk feeling socially outside and having negative thoughts about themselves. They might pull out and have problems handling situations that require self control, conversation, social skill, focus and self confidence.

Chronic lonely children have normally higher expectations to human relations than others. They are socially perfectionists who ask more of themselves than others, both to themselves and others in social interaction. Lonely children and youngsters also regard, to a greater extent, social environment as threatening. They regard others as less reliable and supportive. So what can we do when we feel lonely?

“The more confident, the less lonely”

Lars Fr. H. Svendsen

Trust in the world surrounding us is an important factor, according to professor of philosophy Lars Svendsen. The less confident, the more lonely. The ability to trust others is closely connected to the ability to attach to them. Lack of trust leads to reticence and makes attachment more difficult. To have confidence in the world you need courage, make contact and risk that others will accept you. Courage and vulnerability are the effort. Trust and relation are the reward.

“Vulnerability is the birth place of love, attachment, joy, courage, empathy and creativity.”

Brené Brown

Loneliness challenges us to take positive risks. We need to try new things and build self confidence, which in its turn leads to new interests and skills. Children who already feel rejected and vulnerable do not gladly take that risk. They might be afraid of attention and risk to fail. It is a misunderstanding to think that confidence comes without risk. We must dare being vulnerable to get experience which build trust. You have to accept that social interaction is not perfect. You might have to give up both perfectionism, self criticism and being self-centered. No one can make their way into your loneliness and force it away. But you can let someone in. This takes courage.

The essence of LINK is mirrored in the main goals of self image, belonging and mastering. Deep down this is work no one can do for you. The LINK sessions challenge the pupils to risk confidence and take risks, and in this way prevent loneliness and build belonging.

Loneliness has a tendency to appear indirectly, as response, but also as anger. Some examples of sayings that could express loneliness:

- I feel tired all the time.
- If I disappeared tomorrow nobody would care.
- I feel invisible.
- I have plenty of friends around me, but still I feel something is wrong with me.
- I am bad at everything.

School focuses a lot on preparing for everyone to feel belonging and safety. To be different and feel different is something we all can experience. Due to that we are all dependent on differences being approved and appreciated. To include every one, also those who cannot come to school, will also prevent loneliness. One example is the communication robot AV1, which makes it possible for pupils with long periods of illness to take part socially and in classes. In addition to work for inclusion, friendship and prevention of bullying, the staff in schools can motivate the pupils to risk showing vulnerability and take positive risk. This is to master life.

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Kate Kelly- Why kids who learn and think differently might feel lonely.
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Lars Fr. H. Svendsen, 3.10.19. <https://www.civita.no/politisk-ordbok/hva-er-ensomhet>

Lars Fr. Svendsen, 2.oktober 2015. Min, din eller vår ensomhet? Morgenbladet

Ungdata: <http://www.ungdata.no/Venner/Ensomhet>

Vivek H. Murthy; Together. Loneliness, Health and what Happens when we Find Connection

IMPLEMENTATION IN CLASSROOM

AIM FOR THE SESSION

AIM FOR LINK

Contribute to a stronger self image.

Contribute to experience of belonging.

Contribute to mastering.

COMPETENCE GOAL FOR THE SESSION

Knowledge: Loneliness tells us that we need increased contact with others.

Skill: Practice strategies to get rid of the bad feeling of loneliness, and contribute to the inclusion of others.

Values: To live we all depend entirely on the community with others. People also need a private room to be themselves.

OPENING RITUAL

Start every session activity in the same way. You may well listen to music, light candles, decorate with flowers, shake hands with all participants, or do other positive things. The point is to signal that this is a link-class, and that link-classes differ from other classes.

TODAY'S PRIME SAYING

Everybody tells about a nice thing they have experienced since last session. Remember we are looking for small and simple everyday joys, not boundless happenings.

THEME

PRESENTATION OF THEME

The teacher presents the theme of the day, shortly. Say a few words about the topic of the session. You can choose from the introduction for the teacher. The introduction is simply meant to engage the students in the themes, and should not take more than a few minutes.

Here you find a music video about being alone and missing daddy: *Daddy-Coldplay*

You may well show youngsters this short film by Red Cross: *The invisible loneliness*. (1 min.) - [En film om ensomhet](#)

You may well use prepared Power Point (PP) as a starting point for dialog about the theme.

Below the PP-pictures there are support questions you can use in your dialog with the pupils. You can also make your own questions, but it is important that the questions are open. You are to facilitate for reflection and common wondering and exploration. We are not looking for a fixed answer, but wish that children /young people are able to put words to their thoughts, feelings and opinions. It is not a point to get through all the pictures. If the pupils are eager to comment on the first pictures, it is more important to spend time on these than interrupt an rush on to get through everything.

WE WORK WITH THEME. CHOOSE, REJECT AND ADJUST

Now there are many different tasks you as a teacher can choose among. It is not the intention to do everything that has been proposed. Choose the exercises that suit your group and you as a leader the most. Still we recommend that you choose tasks which make it possible to work with the theme in various ways, both through activity and interaction, play and laughter, and not only through talking.

TASKS

Group tasks where all groups get different questions.

1. LONELINESS AND FEELINGS

Loneliness do not belong to the nine basic feelings, even though we often think about loneliness as a feeling. Show the group an illustration and give them this task: Think about a feeling of loneliness you once had, and talk together about which of the basic feelings you have when you are feeling lonely. Put down key words to share with the others. One can also combine this with the “seigmann”, and tell the group to mark where in your body you feel the loneliness.

2 WHAT CAN WE DO WHEN WE FEEL LONELY AT HOME?

Put down on a board as many suggestions as possible. Could be things you have tried yourself.

3.WHAT CAN WE DO WHEN WE FEEL LONELY AT SCHOOL?

Put down on a board as many suggestions as possible. Could be things you have tried yourself

4. WHAT CAN YOU DO WHEN YOU NOTICE THAT A CLASSMATE FEELS LONELY?

Put down a few things you think one should not do, and focus on at least two things one can do instead.

TALK ABOUT THE FILM

“ODD IS AN EGG” <https://tv.nrk.no/se?v=MSUI31009516&t=667s>

1. Talk about Odd, how he felt at the beginning of the film, and at the end of the film.
2. Talk about what happened to ODD. (he fell in love, got a friend, found someone who was different too, found someone who made Odd show up, wait for someone who did not come at first - but who came at last.)
3. Talk about how we identify. Do we have days when we feel we cannot take anything and easily feel sad? There are other days when we can take anything. That we need a friend. When we have one or some good friends, we would also like to play with more? That friends can be different, etc.

FOR THE OLDEST IN THE GROUP - “INNAFOR” (INSIDE)

The NRK documentary “Innafor”, from 2018, deals with loneliness among young people, in an honest and open way that could be the basis for dialog and reflection among pupils in upper secondary and the oldest ones in lower secondary. You need plenty of time since the documentary lasts for 52 minutes (can be shortened). To start with, after the film, the class can be divided into small groups, and each one deals with a theme before discussion in full class.

Themes to discuss after the film could be:

- Are we all afraid of being lonely, and in that case why?
- Different personalities, do we have the same need for social contacts?
- Can we feel more lonely by comparing ourselves with others?
- Can we feel lonely being together with many?
- What can we do when we feel lonely?
- How can we behave when we are together with many people we do not know?

https://www.nrk.no/video/innafor-ensomhet_310830

FOR THE OLDEST IN THE GROUP- DIARY FROM -TEN PIECES OF ADVICE AGAINST LONELINESS.

Imagine youngsters who have felt considerable loneliness, but who have decided to do something about it. Hen has started realizing “Psychology’s ten good pieces of advice against loneliness”. Hen has to gamble and do things slightly in a new way.

Join together in groups of two or three. Write a short diary note of how it works to try out the new, good pieces of advice in everyday life. You may play a little with what goes well and what does not function, but still try to think realistically. Choose all or just some of the good pieces of advice.

1. Dare to make yourself visible
2. Dare to say how you really feel.
3. Look for mistaken thoughts and expose them.
4. Put perfectionism away.
5. Lower your expectations.
6. Stop comparing yourself with other people.
7. Accept the fact that we have no guaranties.
8. Practice gratitude.
9. Self sympathy.
10. You are valuable.

Source:

Psychology’s ten good pieces of advice against loneliness. By Carina Poulsen and Rebekka T. Egeland.

<http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/debatt/i/iwli/psykologenes-ti-raad-mot-ensomhet>

THE SOUND OF NORWEGIAN YOUTH IN 2019

In connection with the national newspaper VG's ranking list show at Oslo's town hall (Rådhusplassen) in 2019, young people were encouraged to send in their words and thoughts around the theme loneliness. Every contribution has ended up with the artist Lauren. VG's list wanted the youngsters to express their feelings themselves, and what they were thinking. Research shows that quite a few young people feel lonely, in spite of the fact that the majority inform that they have at least one close friend.

I think it is very cool that so many have participated, but also quite sad that so many live their lives feeling bad and lonely, says Lauren. More than 23.000 have contributed. Recurring words are "lonely", "body pressure", "bullying", "alone", "nobody is me". "I am bad at everything was written 157 times. Much of what is revealed is that things look far better on the outside, and it might look like you are doing well, but still you feel alone and displeased with yourself. ([Over 23.000 ungdommer har sendt inn sine tanker om ensomhet – det har blitt låt](#))

Take a look at the conversation between Helsesista and Lauren. Q&A about loneliness (10 min.) [HELSESISTA OG LAUREN: Q&A OM ENSOMHET](#)

After the conversation you may ask the pupils to make notes of their first thoughts on a post-it piece of paper lasting 3 minutes. Make a conversation about these questions:

- What thoughts did you have when you watched the conversation?
- What was revealed about loneliness that you recognizes in yourself?
- Tell about an incident when you worried about going somewhere alone, but went all the same.
- How did it feel, what was the worst moment and how long did it last?
- What can you do when you are somewhere and someone arrives alone?

MORE OR LESS LONELY WITHOUT THE MOBILE?

Watch the music video Lonely by Joel Corry. The video is about people who try to get rid of the dependence of the mobile, and what happens when they have to live without the phone. Discuss whether the mobile makes us more or less lonely?

[Joel Corry - Lonely \[Official Video\]](#)

Philosophical questions. For those who are especially happy philosophizing.

- What do you think these quotations are about?
- To be alone can protect against loneliness.
- What is humanity, apart from a family of families?
- Most of us meet with lonely people all the time without realizing it.
- The strength of being alone can be related to the very smallest moments.
- To be connected to others gives us a part in something bigger than ourselves.

- To be at home means that someone knows you, and to be loved for the one you are.
- To be yourself is to be vulnerable.
- To be alone gives us the possibility to feel self-confident, which again makes it easier to be ourselves in the company of others.
- To be yourself together with others helps building strong relations.

Source: Vivek H. Murthy, freely translated.

JUST FOR FUN

The idea is that everybody should laugh during a Link-session, also when we talk about difficult things, yes, my be especially then.

TASKS

Focus exercises 1-2-3-1

As a starting point you can let the whole class make up one team, while the teacher is the other part. You say ONE, the class responds TWO, you say THREE and the class says ONE. Then you continue with teacher-TWO, the class THREE, the teacher-ONE, the class TWO etc. After a while you replace TWO with a clap and continue with that for a short while.

Divide the class in two, and let them try with one-clap-three-one-clap etc. If it is working quite well, you can replace three with a shout, Hoi!, and in the end you can try replacing One with a tramp. The exercise is over when you have kept the rhythm for a little while.

Even better if you can introduce a “hurrah, I made a mistake”, every time we make a mistake. In this way we show each other that everybody makes mistakes and it is OK.

Afterwards one can talk together about the exercise which creates laughter, make us focus, and that we need to keep eye-contact and work together to succeed.

MY BOOK

Finish one or all of these sentences:

I want to be brave when I feel lonely at school. Then I will dare....

I will be brave when I feel lonely at home. Then I will dare.....

I will be kind and brave when someone I know is lonely. Then I will dare.....

SUMMARY

To sum up we recommend the curl-and-throw task, or chose three things.

CURL-AND-THROW

The curl-and-throw tasks you find in the plan for the session. The pupils are to answer the questions anonymously and curl the sheets together. Then ask who wants to be today's target. This person places himself with his back to the group. The others throw their paper ball against the target. The target has the privilege to read some of the answers, may be three sheets would be just right? If it is popular to be the target, it is important to do it in turns. Some think it's fun to have their answer read and would like to express it, others prefer not to make themselves known. Both ways are just fine. You may comment positively to what is read aloud.

Use the curl-and-throw at the bottom of this sheet. Explain why we do this task.

THREE THINGS

Everybody makes a note of three things they remember from today's session, and three things they have learned. The teacher asks some pupils to read what they have written. The pupils can chose themselves what they want to share.

NEXT TIME

Explain the theme for the next session. Tell the pupils that if they find something problematic about the theme, they can tell the teacher and you find solutions together.

END RITUAL

End all sessions the same way. The ritual should be pleasant and contribute to feeling of being appreciated. A final ritual could be to let the pupils make a circle and pass the class band while playing music.

The class band is made by all the pupils cutting a piece of cloth of about 50 cm. Each pupil may chose his piece of cloth. They can possibly also have some time to decorate it. All the bands are tied together in a circle. We suggest that all the bands are piled up, and one pupil after the other, blindfolded, chose which piece of cloth should be the next. In this way the order and composition will be at random. The advantage of tying the bands instead of sewing, is that you may give room for new pieces of cloth in case of new members in the group.

The class band symbolizes the inclusion of everybody, that everybody has a place in the group. We are tied to each other. We therefore depend on one another, and we chose to look after one another. Everybody should take their place, and everybody should give place. The band circulates and binds us together.

