

## Worksheet for Teachers: Lesson A

### **Lesson Title:** *Aloneness and Loneliness at Various Stages of Life*

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**Lesson objectives:** The objective of the lesson is to introduce pupils to the topics of aloneness and loneliness, enabling them to recognize the differences and similarities between them and to identify what the consequences of experiencing loneliness can be on life. Pupils gain awareness by reproducing existing knowledge of the topic and then reflecting on it and synthesising the new knowledge from the video with their own experience. At the end of the lesson, pupils should be able to independently distinguish between the concepts of aloneness and loneliness and explain the differences between them - i.e. reflecting on the fact that everyone needs to be alone sometimes and can be happy in this situation, whereas the state of loneliness is an unpleasant situation for a person that he/she may not be able to cope with on his/her own. The pupils should then be able to demonstrate these differences on specific examples, discuss why loneliness is problematic for people in society and what consequences it can have for life, and moreover be able to talk about how to prevent loneliness.

**Length and outline of the lesson:** 45+ min (reflective worksheet, instructional video, completion and evaluation of a crossword, discussion about the topic, brainstorming)

**Aids:** working materials, internet, projector to watch the video

### **Procedure:**

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**1. REFLECTING:** Pupils work independently or in small groups with a reflective worksheet that leads to contemplating and reflecting on the concepts of aloneness and loneliness. The individual questions aim at the development of critical thinking in the pupils through the so-called cubing method:

DESCRIBE - *Write down a situation when you felt alone but felt good, and when you felt lonely and these feelings were unpleasant for you.*

COMPARE - *How are these two experiences different from each other? In which ways do you see similarities?*

RECALL/ASSOCIATE - *What comes to your mind when you hear the word loneliness?*

ANALYSE - *What in your opinion can feelings of loneliness bring about?*

APPLY - *Suggest how negative feelings of loneliness can be prevented. How would you prevent them?*

ARGUE - *What makes you decide to be alone sometimes?*

**2. VIDEO:** The class watches a video about aloneness and loneliness together (13 minutes): *Loneliness (in English with Czech subtitles) – Kurzgesagt – In a Nutshell.*

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This teaching material was developed within the GENPATH project (TAČR TJ03000002) with the support of

The video is in English with Czech subtitles (it is necessary to turn them on in the video settings) and presents feelings of loneliness and aloneness, their evolution in human society, the main risks of loneliness and suggestions for prevention and solutions.

YouTube link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3Xv\\_g3g-mA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3Xv_g3g-mA)

It is possible to pause the video in places and fill in parts of the crossword (after each sentence there is a note for the teacher specifying in which part of the video it can be found). The video can be stopped at 11:39 as it only contains references to English books. Below you will find the abstracts of the parts of the video:

**Introduction:** We all experience loneliness in our lives, but over the last few decades this feeling has become chronic for millions of people, leaving them feeling isolated. Being alone and feeling lonely are not the same thing. You can feel lonely even when surrounded by people; it is a subjective and individual experience. Loneliness is part of our biology.

**1. What is loneliness:** Loneliness is a bodily function; it makes us pay attention to our social needs. The pain of isolation has evolved as an evolutionary response to surviving in a group.

**2. The downside of the modern world:** In modern times we meet fewer people in person, people slip into loneliness by mistake when they stop making time for their relationships, then they can feel isolated.

**3. How loneliness can kill:** Chronic loneliness can cause psychological and physical pain, negatively affect the immune system and influence aging, cancer and Alzheimer's disease. It contributes to moodiness, defensiveness, and the interpretation of neutral communication as hostile.

**4. What we can do about it:** We need to acknowledge that we feel lonely and that this can influence our thinking and perception of other people more negatively. It can help to self-examine how we feel and whether we are rejecting new or positive things and relationships in advance. Seeking help from a professional is also a good idea; it is not a sign of weakness but of courage. Let's try to reach out to others and get out of our comfort zone.

**CROSSWORD:** To increase the attention paid by the students to the video and to reinforce new information, a crossword puzzle can be presented to them with the task to complete the sentences that appear in the video. Pupils may be given clues (see below). The hidden words serve to initiate subsequent exercises and discussions about the topic. The correctly completed crossword is placed below.

Nápověda slov: *obezita, spolupráci, mechanismus, univerzální, tělesná, smutku, biologie, osaměle, renesanci (možné poskytnout žákům)*

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7.	M	E	CH	A	N	I	S	M	U	S									
8.	S	M	U	T	K	U													
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- 1) Cítit se "**osaměle**" a být sám není totéž. (úvod)
- 2) Přirozený výběr odměňoval naše předky za "**spolupráci**" a formování vztahů. (1. část)
- 3) Být společenský se stalo nedílnou součástí naší "**biologie**". (úvod)
- 4) Osamělost je "**tělesná**" funkce, podobně jako hlad. (1. část)
- 5) Doslova každý se v určitém bodu svého života cítí osaměle, je to "**univerzální**" zkušenost člověka. (4. část)
- 6) Epidemie osamělosti, kterou vidíme dnes v podstatě začala už v pozdní "**renesanci**". (2. část)
- 7) Jak fyzická, tak psychická bolest používají stejný "**mechanismus**" v našem mozku. (3. část)
- 8) Počáteční pocit izolace vede k pocitům napětí a "**smutku**". (4. část)
- 9) Osamělost je dvakrát smrtelnější než "**obezita**". (3. část)

Tajenka: "**spolu sami**" (k ní se váže začátek následujícímu cvičení)

## DISCUSSIONS:

The phrase '*alone together*' is both strange and interesting in that it can refer to two opposite situations:

- 1) **Being disconnected from other people:** is associated with negative feelings - e.g. two people are physically together but still feel lonely; we are in the middle of a group of people but do not feel connected to them, i.e. we are physically together but feel all the more lonely because we do not feel close. The emphasis is on feeling lonely among people.
- 2) **Being connected with other people:** is associated with positive feelings - e.g. two people are alone together, no one disturbs them, they understand each other, they listen to each other. The emphasis is on the word 'together', doing things together.
- 3) **Feeling lonely together** as a universal experience - we share this feeling as humans together. Occasional feelings of loneliness can be a normal part of everyone's life.

*The objective is to get the pupils to grasp the processes of how feelings of loneliness are created and that they are often linked to a certain context of situations (physically I am in a space with another person and I feel lonely; on the contrary, I seek the situation of being alone with another person, but we both feel mutuality and understanding. The emphasis is on contradicting the idea that one only feels lonely if one is alone, **and that therefore a large number of social relationships does not necessarily preclude feelings of loneliness**, but can paradoxically foster them (see the Contact and Loneliness Model in the file 'General Introduction to Lessons: Information for Teachers'). It is consequently important to focus predominantly on the **quality of relationships** with other people. The second objective is to present pupils with **a positive example of mutuality** as opposed to feelings of loneliness.*

Discussing the issues:

- 1) What different meanings can the phrase 'alone together' have? What do you imagine when you hear it? When would you use it?  
*See the explanation of the phrase above.*

2) During which situations and events can people feel lonely?

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*Pupils can use their notes from the materials they filled in at the beginning of the lesson. The teacher may write pupils' ideas on the board and expand on them when answering question 3. The aim is to lead pupils away from confusing aloneness and loneliness and enable them to distinguish between them.*

- 3) What preventive measure would you suggest to help overcome feelings of loneliness in such situations? Can you help yourself by asking what you would do if you woke up feeling lonely in the morning? Are there any activities, things or people that would help you overcome such unpleasant feelings?

*Pupils should be able to apply the knowledge from the video and build on the answers from question 2. Preventive measures can relate to individual strategies (seeking help in person or on social networks, getting in touch and sharing one's feelings with people they know, taking up hobbies, common interests...) or come from others (pupils would approach such a person, spending time with him/her, inviting him/her to an event with other people...).*

- 4) The video presented loneliness as a universal experience that we all feel regardless of age. Now try for a moment to put yourself in the shoes of a person of your grandparents' age. How do you think their older age might relate to feelings of loneliness? Could older age and old age somehow influence people to feel lonely more often?

*The aim is to get pupils to apply information about loneliness to other generational groups. Here the teacher can use information from the introductory general material on how loneliness affects older people and why older people may feel lonely (widowhood, death of peers, retirement, change in health - increased physical and mental difficulties, etc.).*

- 5) Imagine that you are the mayor or mayoress of a city or town and you have to create a project for residents to help older people with feelings of loneliness. What kind of project would it be? Why do you think it could help older people?

*The teacher may divide the pupils into groups to come up with one joint project (What is the project? How does it work? What is its goal?) or write the ideas of the whole class on the board. These could include for example already existing senior citizen clubs, phone lines for communication, organizing a group meal cooking/eating in a specific area, showing old films with discussions, support of organizations and facilities for seniors, etc.).*

#### **4. BRAINSTORMING: Where to Find Help, Who to Contact**

The materials for pupils include links to two instructional videos - the one that they have seen in class and a longer one that goes into the topic in more depth; and a Czech 'Nonviolent Communication Podcast' on relationships, communication and conflicts presented by Masaryk University lecturers. It also lists **examples of websites, helplines and organisations** that have been dealing with loneliness issues among teenagers and older people on a long term basis.

The teacher can first **encourage the pupils to brainstorm**, 'Where can you go for advice and help in the Czech Republic?' (*psychologists in the school/city/country, helplines as well as mental health and well-being organizations, etc.*)

Subsequently, after reflecting together, show the pupils the sites and help them to familiarise themselves with them. Then, near the end of the lesson, hand out or send out the last worksheet that contains the information. If pupils have someone in their neighbourhood who is in a similar situation, they can make use of these guides, tools and helplines.

## Worksheet for Pupils: Lesson A



**Task 1:** Think about the questions and then try to answer them briefly in a few sentences:

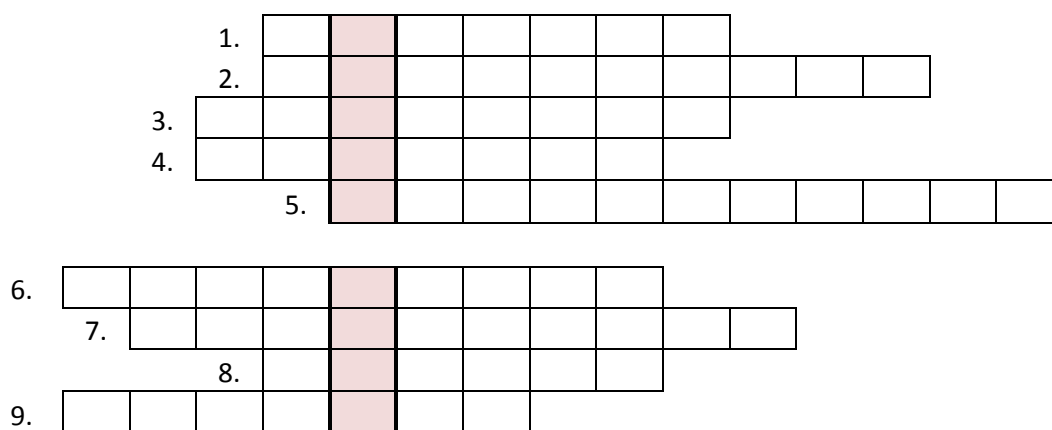
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1. Try to recall and write about a situation when you felt alone but felt good, and when you felt lonely and these feelings were unpleasant for you.
2. How are these two experiences different from each other? In which ways do you see similarities?
3. What comes to your mind when you hear the word loneliness?
4. What in your opinion can feelings of loneliness bring about?
5. Suggest how negative feelings of loneliness can be prevented. How would you prevent them?
6. What makes you decide to be alone sometimes?



**Task 2:** Watch the video about loneliness, use the information in the video to complete the words in the crossword puzzle and find the hidden words:

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- 1) Cítit se \_\_\_\_\_ a být sám není totéž.
- 2) Přirozený výběr odměňoval naše předky za \_\_\_\_\_ a formování vztahů.
- 3) Být společenský se stalo nedílnou součástí naší \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4) Osamělost je \_\_\_\_\_ funkce, podobně jako hlad.
- 5) Doslova každý se v určitém bodu svého života cítí osaměle, je to \_\_\_\_\_ zkušenost člověka.
- 6) Epidemie osamělosti, kterou vidíme dnes v podstatě začala už v pozdní \_\_\_\_\_.
- 7) Jak fyzická, tak psychická bolest používají stejný \_\_\_\_\_ v našem mozku.
- 8) Počáteční pocit izolace vede k pocitům napětí a \_\_\_\_\_.
- 9) Osamělost je dvakrát smrtelnější než \_\_\_\_\_.

Hidden words: \_\_\_\_\_



## INFORMATION AND IMPORTANT REFERENCES

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**1) Video: Loneliness** (in English with Czech subtitles) - Kurzgesagt - In a Nutshell: 'Everyone feels lonely sometimes. However, few realize how important this feeling was to our ancestors - and that our modern world can turn this into something that really hurts us.'

Link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3Xv\\_g3g-mA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3Xv_g3g-mA)

**2) Video: Why Are We So Lonely? - Glad You Asked S1**, in English with English subtitles, 'We often have a lot of opinions and assumptions about the things that make us lonely. Why is it, then, that half of the American population reports feeling lonely on a regular basis?'

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EidKI1Bdons&t=529s>

**3) Non-violent Communication Podcast:** a podcast by Petr Holík and Petr Sucháček about effective, open and empathetic communication based on the method of non-violent communication.

Link: <https://ceskepodcasty.cz/podcasty/nenasilny-podcast>

## WHERE TO GO FOR ADVICE AND HELP?

- **Nevypust' duši (Don't Lose Your Soul):** The site provides useful links and contacts; information about loneliness and such; guidelines on what to do in crisis situations; tools showing how to confide in others and how to listen; support programmes and exercises; contacts to psychological counselling and much more.

More information: <https://nevypustdusi.cz/infografika/>

- **Poradna Linky bezpečí (Advice Helpline) (tel. 116 111):** This helpline can be contacted free of charge by children, young people and students up to the age of 26 if they need someone to talk to safely about feelings of loneliness, sadness, fear and much more. The helpline is open non-stop day and night; its team members are happy to listen and will try to give you advice and help.

More information: <https://www.linkabezpeci.cz/poradna/skola-a-kamaradi/osamelost/>

- **Elpida Senior Citizens' Line (tel. 800 200 007):** Elpida operates a free senior citizens' line providing anonymous telephone and email crisis assistance not only for seniors, but also for those caring for seniors and people in crisis. In a safe space it is possible to share feelings and experiences of loneliness, loss, aging, but also issues of caring for the older persons in the family and the demanding life situations associated with it

More information: <https://www.elpida.cz/linka-senioru-zavolejte-nam>

- **Senior Telephone Helpline (tel. 800 157 157):** The Život90 organisation has set up a free helpline for seniors and their carers who need help in dealing with an urgent or adverse social situation, or just need a safe anonymous place to share their feelings.

More information: <https://www.zivot90.cz/cs/asistence/senior-telefon>

- **How to deal with loneliness alone? (ŽIVOT 90):** This series of 4 videos presents loneliness from various angles. You will gain a brief insight into the theory of loneliness

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and you can try exercises that can help you at least a little with your feelings of loneliness.  
The videos are presented by Tereza Hacová.

More information: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4aIXRiyZ-Bs>