

## Worksheet for Teachers: Lesson B

### **Lesson Title:** *What Is Aloneness and Loneliness and How Can We Actively Listen to Others?*

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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. The pupils should then be able to demonstrate these differences on specific examples and discuss why loneliness is problematic for people in society, how it relates to an older population and how to prevent it. The lesson also uses dyad practice *to activate empathy and active listening in pupils*. This teaches them the importance of communication, sharing and listening with the aim of generating feelings of understanding and belonging.

**Length and outline of the lesson:** 45–60 min (instructional video, crossword for completion and evaluation, dyad practice in pairs, joint reflection on dyads, brainstorming on ways to prevent and deal with loneliness)

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

### **Procedure:**

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**1. VIDEO:** The teacher invites students to **reflect independently** on the questions: *When was the last time you felt lonely? What were those feelings like? Do you know anyone who might feel lonely?* Pupils can also write their answers down on paper individually. Afterwards the class watches a video about aloneness and loneliness together (13 minutes). *Loneliness (in English with Czech subtitles) – Kurzgesagt – In a Nutshell*. 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.

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- 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.

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

1.	O	S	A	M	Ě	L	E												
2.	S	P	O	L	U	P	R	Á	C	I									
3.	B	I	O	L	O	G	I	E											
4.	T	Ě	L	E	S	N	Á												
5.	U	N	I	V	E	R	Z	Á	L	N	Í								
6.	R	E	N	E	S	A	N	C	I										
7.	M	E	CH	A	N	I	S	M	U	S									
8.	S	M	U	T	K	U													
9.	O	B	E	Z	I	T	A												

- 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)

**2. QUESTION before the dyad practice:** *What different meanings can the phrase 'alone together' have? What do you imagine when you hear it? When would you use it?*

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.*

**3. DYAD PRACTICE (approx. 15 minutes):** Dyad practice is an exercise in pairs and has been popularized through a non-violent communication approach. Pupils are divided into pairs and sit opposite each other. Pupil A asks pupil B the question 'How are you doing at the moment, how do you feel?' (this can both aim at right now or reflect the whole week). Pupil B then has 2 minutes to speak and pupil A should remain silent the whole time and just listen. After 2 minutes, measured by the teacher, indicated for example by ringing the bell at the end, pupil A should repeat and interpret in his/her own words what pupil B has shared with him/her during that time. Pupil B should not interfere with pupil A's monologue at this point, only listen. After the two minutes are up, the pupils switch roles.

*The practice can be challenging for both the speaker and the pupil who is to remain silent. **It is natural that some students will be confused**; they will not know what to say or will not be able just to listen. The aim of the exercise is to develop empathy, listening and interpretation and to illustrate how feelings of understanding and belonging are formed (or not). The pupils' monologues can be stretched up to 5 minutes each (i.e. 5 minutes pupil B, 5 minutes pupil A + 5 minutes pupil A, 5 minutes pupil B), as required. This exercise can be implemented in two ways: 1) the teacher lets the pupils pair up as they wish according to how familiar the pupils themselves are with each other and how intimate the*

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relationship is; 2) the teacher pairs pupils by random draw to achieve the dyad practice between pupils who do not necessarily have a deeper relationship with each other.

**4. REFLECTING ON DYAD PRACTICE:** After the exercise, there is a period of reflection on how the pupils felt during the sharing, repeating and listening. The aim is to relate the experience to the feelings of loneliness that often result from a lack of understanding, listening and reciprocity. The teacher's goal is to gather the experiences of what happened to the pupils, how they felt during the exercise, and to divide these experiences into two contrasting situations: 1) when they felt as being together during the activity, and 2) when they felt alone during the activity.

- 1) How did you feel when sharing your feelings about the day? Was it challenging/easy, too short/long?

*Pupils who know each other well may find the exercise easier than pairs who do not know each other much. It can also be challenging for pupils to just listen without interrupting the other person, without jumping in, as this is generally a type of communication we are not used to. It is important to mention that this exercise can be demanding and it is natural for one not to know what to say or to tend to somehow interject into the other person's monologue. Pupils may feel awkward and uncomfortable, this is also natural when communicating and sharing, and these feelings should not be suppressed or judged negatively, only reflected upon in light of the personality of the pupil and the dynamics of the pair.*

Going back to the phrase 'alone together', when did you feel more alone during the dyad practice - as the silent/speaking participant and when did you feel more together and feel the other participant was paying attention to you? What was the reason for this?

*The fact that the pupils feel comfortable, acknowledged and 'together' may be partly because they already know and trust each other within their pairs and further that they felt listened to and 'correctly' interpreted by the other participant. Interpretation here can either increase the feeling of being understood (I am understood by the other participant, he/she has really listened to me) or, on the contrary, of not being understood (he/she has not listened to what I have been saying, he/she does not remember anything).*

**A period of reflection for the pupils in conclusion:** Feeling listened to and respected by the other participant is also part of the feeling of being connected to others and not feeling so lonely. This makes it easier to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings that tend to cause feelings of loneliness in older age - for example, conflicts with family, acquaintances and friends. Empathy and active listening are skills that we learn throughout our lives and can also practice. *Try to think if you have older relatives/acquaintances in your area who may feel lonely and how listening and sharing (even from your side) could help them overcome negative feelings.*

## 5. 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.

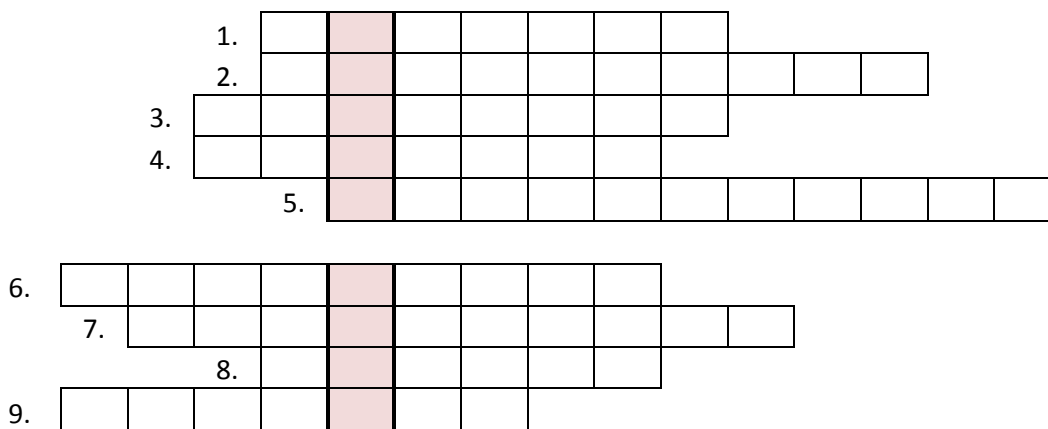
The teacher can first **encourage the pupils to brainstorm**, 'Where can you go for advice and help in the Czech Republic?' (*psychologists in the school/city/country, helplines as well as mental health and well-being organizations, etc.*)

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 B



**Task 1:** Watch the video about loneliness, use the information in the video to complete the words in the crossword puzzle and find the hidden words:



- 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

**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>

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**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 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>