

Fitting In and Self-Esteem

Everyone feels awkward, insecure, or alone at times. This often happens when you are growing up. It is common to not feel great about yourself sometimes. Most people your age also feel this way, even the ones who seem to have it all.

It May be Hard to Feel Good About Our Social Life

From age 10 to 24, we are in a stage of life when social stress is deeply felt. This is how our brain works.

Young people feel lonely more than any other age group. Today, about two times as many teens feel lonelier than teens ten years ago.

This may be because of technology. There are big differences between socializing online and in-person. Miscommunication, comparing yourself to others, and the fear of missing out are common when using technology and can lead to hurt feelings.

Keep in mind that at this age, your social circle may only be those in your school or hometown. People around you right now may not like the same things as you. It is also possible to feel lonely even if you have lots of friends.



Tips for Building Self-Esteem

You Cannot Read People's Minds: Try not to guess how someone is feeling. A strange look in the hallway or a text someone has not responded to may not be for the reason you think. It does not mean the person does not like you.

Use Positive Self-Talk: Make a list of your strengths and good qualities. Tell yourself you are strong and you matter.

Challenge Negative Thinking: When you start thinking in extremes (all or nothing), such as no one likes me, try to challenge why you are thinking this way.

Pay attention to words like always and never. Try another view. Try replacing always and never with maybe and sometimes.

Practice Self-Compassion: Try not to be hard on yourself. You are doing the best you can and that is okay. Think of the reasons you deserve kindness and patience.



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The Struggle to Fit in

Young people say they struggle to feel accepted. Here are things they say:

- Everyone else seems to have an easy time in life.
- It is hard to relate and trust people.
- I do not have the same interests as others my age.
- There is history of racism, sexism and homophobia.
- Some of us do not believe in the same things.
- I overthink things and this makes me feel I am not connected to others.
- Peers may not like how I act.
- I am not popular. People see me as weird, even those who do not know me.



Building Community

A community is a group of people that share the same interests as you, or have other things in common.

There are many ways to build and be in a community.

- Talk to a classmate you think you may get along with.
- If you are not connecting with classmates, get involved outside of school.
- Try to talk to one new person every day.
- Be friendly to people, such as at the grocery store or the bus driver.



If You or Someone You Know Needs Help

It can be hard to know if a lack of confidence or problems with friends is just a part of growing up or if it is a sign of a mental health condition, like anxiety or depression.

If you are putting yourself out there and still do not feel connected to others or are unhappy with your social life, there are resources that can help.

Go to www.mhascreening.org. You can take a survey and answer a few questions to know if you may need more help.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, there is help.

- Call **988**
- Chat at www.988lifeline.org
- Text the Crisis Text Line. Text **MHA** to **741741**.

