

# Solving Loneliness: Course Content Guide

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# Solving Loneliness: Course Content Guide

## Welcome

Congratulations on taking this step to build your well-being! If you are, or have ever felt lonely, please know this is a normal emotion. Loneliness is something experienced by millions of people worldwide on a daily basis. There is nothing wrong with you for feeling this way.

This curriculum was made possible through a collaboration between the **Arizona State University** (ASU) Center for Mindfulness, Compassion and Resilience and the **Arizona Department of Health Services** (ADHS). This course falls under the 2021-2025 AzDHS Health Improvement Plan (HIP) Mental Well-Being priority to address loneliness and social isolation.

The information you find here will build your skill set to better deal with difficult emotions like loneliness. You will also find practices to be kinder to yourself in the present moment. This may increase your ability to sit with unpleasant feelings. Research shows that when we are kind and gentle to ourselves, we are better able to deal with life's challenges. Mindfulness, or self-awareness, lets us see the places where we could use a little more compassion. When we are more connected with ourselves, we become better prepared to find exactly what we need to do to feel better.

This curriculum is divided into seven modules featuring introductory and concluding modules, and five learning modules. The learning modules cover five main unit topics: **Loneliness, Stress, Mindfulness, Compassion & Gratitude, and Resilience**. We have created tools and practices for each lesson, designed to be accessible and useful for anyone: independent learners, communities, small or large groups, formal classes, and one-to-one engagement with clients or patients. For that reason, we've made the lessons as flexible as possible. You can work through the lesson modules one by one, from beginning to end, or focus on those most useful to particular situations.

This content guide includes recommendations, notes, resources, and supplemental materials for both independent users and facilitators. We recommend using this guide in conjunction with the module lessons to make the most of the material. All you need is a little time carved out of each day, a notebook or journal, a pen, and a willingness to try some new tools to improve your wellbeing!

Again, welcome, and we hope this material is useful to you!

## About the Content: Sequential Learning

There is no wrong way to use this course. We encourage you to start at the beginning and make your way through, but you can also jump around in the content depending on your needs or interests. This course is self-paced, so there is no time limit on completing (or not completing) it. It is a course you can stop and come back to on your own schedule. You can access the material online or print it out. This information is meant to be accessed by anyone, anywhere, in a convenient way.

For best results, we recommend working through the materials with this guide, in sequential order from beginning to end:

### Module 1: Introduction

The first module is an introduction to this course. We explain the background of our collaboration, and the mission and purpose of Arizona State University's Center for Mindfulness, Compassion and Resilience. We introduce our content experts, and share their qualifications in developing this curriculum.

We also introduce our **Seven Lonely People**, characters we've created to show how the causes and effects of loneliness can be deeply unique depending on our personal situations, backgrounds, beliefs, and values. In creating these characters, it's our hope that you will be able to recognize similarities between yourself and one (or more) of them. We revisit these characters throughout the modules, illustrating different ways we can deal with loneliness in our lives.

### Module 2: Loneliness

In the second module, we discuss what loneliness is, the many ways we can experience it, and how it can be harmful to our health. We connect it to wellbeing and boredom, talk about the three main types of loneliness, examine why we become lonely, and address how we can become less lonely. This lesson also features links to videos from ASU's Center for Mindfulness, Compassion, and Resilience exploring the power of community and how to navigate loneliness.

In **Module 2: Loneliness Learning Tools**, we check in on our Seven Lonely People. We learn more about what factors in each of their very different lives lead them to be lonely. This module also contains knowledge checks, reflection activities and we also offer the first of our self-assessment tools in the form of a diagnostic quiz. Users can take this quiz to determine if they are lonely, or at increased risk of loneliness.

## **Module 3: Stress**

In this module, we examine stress and how loneliness itself can be a significant cause of stress in our lives. We explore different types of stress and the effects of stress on our bodies, mental state, emotions, and behaviors.

**Module 3: Stress Learning Tools**, includes knowledge checks, reflection activities, and a check-in with our Seven Lonely People meant to generate thought and self-reflection.

## **Module 4: Mindfulness**

The course content for this module can be found in **Module 4: Mindfulness**. In this lesson we talk about the practice we share as a means of overcoming loneliness: mindfulness. Loneliness can be caused by many factors, including societal or structural barriers like racism, homophobia, socioeconomic limitations, and so forth. Our approach to navigating and overcoming loneliness is based on mindfulness because its principles and practices are accessible to anyone. In this section, we discuss what mindfulness is (and isn't), the basic philosophies and attitudes we can adopt to become more mindful, and the evidence-based benefits of being mindful.

To aid users in their practice and pacing, the learning tools for this module have been included in a distinct presentation **Module 4: Mindfulness Learning Tools**. Here you will find a note on mindful practices, tips for being mindful in daily life, and mindful practices. **Module 4: Character Profiles** reviews exercises that are designed to prompt reflection on ways to incorporate mindfulness into daily life, outside of the structured mindful practice exercises provided. We suggest you complete the lesson content and review **A Note on Mindful Practice** (page 13) and **Mindfulness Sample Practice Sequence** (page 14) within this guide prior to exploring the learning tools to make the most of this module.

## **Module 5: Compassion and Gratitude**

In this module, we look at the connection between happiness and compassion for both ourselves and others. Developing greater compassion and self-compassion is one of the most beneficial effects of engaging in mindfulness practice, managing stress, and overcoming loneliness. This lesson explores the relationship between compassion, stress, mindfulness, and relationships as well as the connection between compassion, self-compassion, and gratitude. Also included in this module are links to videos covering self-esteem and self-compassion, as well as empathy and compassion.

**Module 5: Compassion and Gratitude Learning Tools** includes writing exercises you can practice to become more self-compassionate and practice gratitude. This lesson also includes character profiles featuring our Seven Lonely People and how they practice compassion. We explore why their practices work and how they highlight the connection between empathy, compassion, stress, and resilience.

## **Module 6: Becoming Resilient**

In this learning module, we examine resilience, the ability to withstand challenges and bounce back stronger from difficulties. This lesson features a Midday Mindfulness video link from ASU's Center for Mindfulness, Compassion, and Resilience on the power community. Within this lesson we define resilience, explore the relationship between resilience and community, how to build community, and why resilience is important for developing lifelong coping strategies for loneliness. We also congratulate users on completing the lesson content for the course and introduce the final module which will mark the conclusion of the course in its entirety.

## **Module 7: Course Conclusion**

We know that loneliness isn't a one-time problem with a one-time, quick-fix solution. You may face different types of loneliness, caused by different situations, over and over throughout life. One of the reasons we feature our Seven Lonely People is so learners will be equipped to navigate the range of causes and effects of loneliness. The lessons, learning tools, and exercises in this course are designed to equip learners with tools and

strategies to help them not just now, but also if and when loneliness rears its head in the future.

In this final module, we summarize the lessons learned throughout the course and explore next steps for integrating these lessons into daily life. This module includes reflection exercises for applying what has been learned and developing an individualized plan for solving loneliness and building a resilience toolkit. By practicing the various exercises found throughout this module and previous lessons, it is possible to build resilience not only for your current loneliness, but future loneliness, as well as other forms of stress.

## **The Learning Tools**

In addition to our Seven Lonely People and the scenarios in which we find them, these modules also include a variety of self-assessments and tools to accommodate various learning styles. These include: knowledge checks and quizzes, true or false questions, identification exercises, prompts for self-reflection, and challenge exercises. The learning tools can be used and adapted to suit individual needs and learning styles as well as engage in group discussions. This guide includes notes for independent users and group facilitators on how to best use the tools for their situation and learning style, as well as resources for facilitators leading group lessons.

# Facilitator Guide

We have designed the tools and practices contained in these modules to be accessible and useful for anyone:

- Independent learners
- Communities, small or large groups
- Formal classes
- One-to-one engagement with clients or patients

For that reason, we've made the lessons as flexible as possible. You and your clients can work through these modules one by one, from beginning to end, or focus on those most useful to their situations.

This curriculum consists of four main unit topics: **Loneliness, Stress, and Mindfulness, and Compassion & Gratitude**. Each module includes a set of learning tools. Within each learning tool, we include recommendations for use by both independent learners and group or session facilitators.

## Delivering the Content

Although this curriculum is designed to be accessed and practiced by individuals through the Arizona Department of Health Services website, we know that health care providers, community leaders, faith leaders, and social service providers are also integral in helping bring this curriculum to clients, patients, and communities.

How you share this content will vary greatly depending on your relationships with and access to these individuals, your communities needs, and your own learning and teaching styles. The strategies for sharing this content are flexible and suitable for use in a variety of teaching and facilitating scenarios, including:

- Informal or formal one-to-one coaching or mentorship
- Open community gatherings or workshops
- Regular discussion groups or mentoring circles
- Both online or in-person



## Workshop Facilitation

For those wishing to provide this content through workshops or group instruction, we offer a workshop template and suggested outlines for workshop instruction in **60-Minute Workshop Series Sample Agenda** (page 8) within this guide. For those who have never facilitated guided meditation, we also highly encourage you to review **A Note on Mindful Practices** (page 13). This document includes both tips for practicing or guiding meditation exercises as well as a suggested four-week meditation practice. Note that in the suggested workshop curriculum provided, the four-week mindfulness practice is not introduced until the last workshops, with the intent being that participants will take up the practices post-workshop.

Of course, our recommended workshop structure and curricula are only one way these materials may be used, which is why our learning tools include separate, additional notes for users and facilitators found in this guide under **Module Notes for Independent Users and Facilitators** (page 18). Ultimately, content delivery and facilitation is up to you and your teaching or facilitation style!

## Establishing Ground Rules

Ground rules help set expectations for conduct and respectful, productive discussion and dialogue within your group or workshop, and are important in creating a space in which group members feel safe participating and sharing their ideas, thoughts, and experiences. To set the ground rules for your facilitation you can use the sample list found below, ask the group to modify and expand on the sample list, or have the group draft their own unique list from scratch.

### Sample Ground Rules:

- Put away cell phones, tablets, or other electronic devices
- Be ready to participate fully
- Listen to others with intent and empathy
- Be respectful, supportive, and encouraging of other participants
- Unless asked, do not give advice
- Replace *you should...* statements with *I might...* statements

- **Don't assume others' experiences:** Respond with *I hear...* or *from what you've said, I understand...*
- **Vegas Rules:** Do not share other participants' stories outside the group or workshop

# 60-Minute Workshop Series Sample Agenda

**[Workshop Series Title] Coping with Loneliness Through Mindfulness**

**[Workshop Title]**

*[Insert date, time, location]*

Presented by: *[facilitator names, credentials or organization]*

## Introduction

Duration: 5-10 mins

This part of the workshop is where you will do the 'housekeeping' or 'nuts and bolts' of the workshop and set the stage for the session. This is an important step if this is the first workshop of a series or with a group. In subsequent sessions, you may scale back this section (shorter introductions, a simple recap of ground rules) to provide additional time for other activities.

### Facilitator Introduction:

Introduce yourself! Who you are, what your organization is/does, and (most importantly) what brings you to this work and why it is important to you. This might be the most important part of the workshop! The tone you start the workshop with will determine how your group or audience engages with you for the remainder of the session. For instance, you may strive to be engaging and warm to prompt active group participation.

### Brief Overview of Workshop Learning Objectives:

Share some brief learning objectives that will help your group keep track of what they're going to be learning. Try to choose three or four for each workshop. Doing so will help both you and your group or audience keep on track. Be mindful of limiting the number of objectives, as you don't want to overwhelm your participants! It may be useful to write these on a whiteboard or list them on a slide if you are using a slide show.

Each learning module of this curriculum **Module 2: Loneliness, Module 3: Stress, Module 4: Mindfulness, Module 5: Compassion & Gratitude, and Module 6: Becoming Resilient** includes a brief lesson overview from which you may pull your learning objectives for the corresponding workshop or class.

### Introducing Ground Rules:

To create an environment in which participants will feel comfortable discussing and sharing some vulnerable feelings and experiences, it's important to create an environment where they will not feel judged, evaluated, or dismissed.

Using the guidelines found earlier in **Facilitator Guide: Establishing Ground Rules (page 7)** as a guide, create your own rules, or create ground rules with input from the group during the first workshop. In subsequent sessions or any time you gain new group members, make sure to review the rules with the group.

To create an even greater sense of ownership of the workshop experience for your participants, you might ask members to call out the rules...just make sure to read any that they miss! You might also use the rule-reading as an opportunity to ask if there are any additional rules or changes the group wants to make after the last session.

### **Participant Introductions:**

Ask participants to introduce themselves during the first session. This is a great strategy to break the ice for the session and help set a conversational, personal tone to the workshop!

Go around the room and allow each participant one to two minutes to speak. Ask participants to share their first name, the reason they are taking the workshop, what they hope to gain from the experience, and something personal, unique, or fun about themselves. For larger groups, or if time is limited, consider splitting the group into smaller groups of three to six people and have members introduce themselves within their smaller group.

In subsequent sessions, members can simply introduce themselves by first name if time is limited. We recommend dedicating at least one minute per person to share. Mix up the introductions – the goal is for participants to get to know one another, grow comfortable with the group, and establish connection. See if you can come up with a new 'icebreaker' for each session!

## **Mini Lesson**

Duration: 10-15 mins

For each learning module of this curriculum, we've included 4 to 6 brief lessons. We suggest covering these in the order provided, as each is designed to complement the others in a logical order.

The lessons of this curriculum are designed for both independent and educational learning. If you are facilitating this workshop or class for the first time, we suggest familiarizing yourself with the content in advance to be comfortable presenting it to your group. Think of this as a mini-book report or presentation: highlight or note the key points of each lesson that stand out to you, then simply 'present' what you learned to your group or audience.

In some lessons, you'll find information for further reading, either to popular press articles or scholarly research. Feel free to flush out your understanding of each lesson by reviewing these, but they aren't strictly necessary to the lesson!

If your circumstance allows (for instance, if your group members have registered in advance and have access to the curriculum module), consider assigning them the lessons you will cover in advance. That way, your 'lecture' is a reiteration of what they've already read, and you can devote more time to asking if they have thoughts or questions about the content or discussing it as a group.

We recommend dedicating no more than 10 to 15 minutes of the workshop to lecturing – depending on your preference (and the attention span of your audience!) you may cover this content all at once or split it into 'mini-lessons' spread throughout the workshop hour interspersed with the corresponding activities or reflections from the lesson's Learning Tools.

## **Individual, Paired, or Small-Group Activity**

Duration: 10 mins

For each learning module in this curriculum, we've included an assortment of reflections, activities, self-inventories, and knowledge checks. Dedicate some time to your workshop session for either individual or paired/small-group learning around these to reinforce the lessons of the

module and give participants a chance to process and apply the content of the lesson.

Depending on the exercise or reflection, plan to spend five to ten minutes on this. Knowledge checks and activities are good if you have a shorter amount of time. For reflection prompts, try to give participants a little longer.

Many of the materials in the Learning Tools can be adapted easily to either individual or paired/small group activities or group discussions. Offering both individual and small-group work during your workshop ensures your workshop is participatory and meets the broadest array of learning styles within your group. Some participants may process better through silent reflection or writing, while others process through collaboration.

If you have assigned your participants into pairs or small groups to complete activities, have each group briefly report back to the larger group at the end of the session. This helps encourage participants to interact and share with the broader group and creates a sense of community.

For **Module 4: Mindfulness Learning Tools** instead of activities, reflections, or knowledge checks, we've provided several guided meditation or mindfulness exercises. We suggest selecting one longer practice or a couple shorter practices to lead your participants through. Then, dedicate group discussion time to having participants (a) reflect and journal on the experience and (b) share with the larger group.

## **Group Discussion**

**Duration: 25 mins**

During your workshop, we recommend dedicating at least one-third of the session to group discussion. This gives group participants a chance to share insights and learn from one another. It also helps foster a sense of group cohesion and connection.

As the workshop facilitator, choose an activity (or two!) from the Learning Tools corresponding to the module to work through and discuss as a group. Before starting the discussion, it's a good idea to remind

participants of the group's ground rules to ensure a productive, respectful discussion. It's important to establish a safe and brave space for participants to disclose their experiences and thoughts.

## **Workshop Wrap-Up**

Duration: 5 mins

At the conclusion of the workshop session, save a little time for administrative details:

- Summarize the learning objectives and what participants have done in this workshop session.
- Assign readings or exercises (knowledge checks, written reflections) that participants should complete before the next workshop.
- Briefly outline how this lesson connects to the lessons of past workshops in the series.
- Remind participants about the next workshop in the series (time, date, location) and give a brief overview of what will be covered in that workshop.
- If you are taking attendance or distributing handouts or materials, make sure all attendees have received sign-in sheets/materials before they leave.

If possible, as you dismiss the group, invite participants to stick around to speak privately if they have any additional concerns or questions from the workshop. You may also wish to provide your phone number or email address should any questions arise between this workshop and the next.

## A Note on Mindful Practices

Meditation is a form of mindfulness exercise that can be practiced either on our own or in groups, and may be either guided or unguided. The practices included in this section are common mindfulness exercises that are commonly introduced in mindfulness training for stress management.

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### Notes for users and facilitators:

The meditation practices offered in **Module 4: Mindfulness Learning Tools** are designed to introduce a beginner to meditation for stress management or emotional regulation.

Users may opt to practice any or all exercises, though they are sequenced in an order to provide a natural progression for new practitioners. For those wishing maximum benefit from this curriculum, we suggest these exercises be practiced over a **four-week timeframe** (see sample practice sequence on next page). Suggested daily practice time is less than one hour per day. We recommend completing the curriculum modules (and accompanying learning tools) for **Module 2: Loneliness** and **Module 3: Stress** before starting these exercises.

**Individual Learners:** If practicing on your own, print out or familiarize yourself with the scripting or instructions for each practice in advance.

**Facilitators:** If facilitating a group or clients, provide members with scripting. Introduce each exercise in session, but have clients or group members follow the curriculum (on next page) outside of meetings as ongoing 'homework.' Start each session or group with a check-in, encouraging participants to share any insights from their reflection journal.



# Mindfulness Sample Practice Sequence

## Week one:

- Practice: Tune-In (five minutes daily)
- Practice: Deep Breathing (three two-minute sessions daily)
- Practice: Mindful Eating (daily at least one meal, applying steps from Raisin Meditation)
- Reflection/journaling (five to ten minutes daily)

## Week two:

- Practice: Tune-In (five minutes daily)
- Practice: Deep Breathing (three two-minute sessions daily)
- Practice: Mindful Eating (daily at least one meal, applying steps from Raisin Meditation)
- Practice: Five-Senses Meditation **AND** Practice: Resting in Awareness (five-ten minutes daily, alternating practices daily)
- Reflection/journaling (five to ten minutes daily)

## Week three:

- Practice: Tune-In (five minutes daily)
- Practice: Deep Breathing (three two-minute sessions daily)
- Practice: Mindful Eating (daily at least one meal, applying steps from Raisin Meditation)
- Practice: Five-Senses Meditation **OR** Practice: Resting in Awareness (**fifteen** minutes every other day, alternating days with Practice: The Body Scan)
- Practice: The Body Scan (fifteen minutes every other day, alternating days with Practice: Five-Senses Meditation or Practice: Resting in Awareness)
- Reflection/journaling (five to ten minutes daily)

## Week four:

- Repeat week three, but stretch Practice: The Body Scan for **thirty minutes** at least once

## Daily reflections:

For daily reflection, keep a small notebook or journal. Reflect on two or more of the following questions daily.

- How did I feel before I did this meditation, physically, mentally, and emotionally?
- How do I feel now that I've done the meditation? What's different, or what was the experience like?
- What did I enjoy about this meditation? What did I find useful?
- What was difficult or challenging about this meditation?
- How could I use this meditation in my daily life? Would that be useful to me?

# Tips for Practicing or Guiding Mindfulness

The following are general tips for beginners to meditation practice.

## 1. Practice consistency

Try to practice your meditation at the same time and space each day. Many people choose to meditate first thing when they wake up in the morning or in the evening before bed.

## 2. Choose Your Space

Find a space in which you can be uninterrupted during your meditation, as free from distraction as possible.

## 3. Be Intentional About Your Posture

Most meditations can be done seated, lying down, or even standing.

- If **seated** on the floor or a cushion, sit cross-legged or on your knees, whichever is more comfortable, with your hands resting at your knees. If seated on a chair, place both feet on the floor and fold your hands in your lap.
- If lying down, lay flat on your back, arms at your side, legs straight and ankles and feet relaxed, flopping to whichever side is comfortable.
- If **standing**, allow both hands to rest at your sides, feet in a stance wide enough to comfortably maintain your balance, and weight evenly distributed between both legs.

Whatever position you choose, keep your posture gently alert yet relaxed, with your back and neck straight. Allow your shoulders and jaw to relax. If comfortable, close your eyes or allow your gaze to drift to some point in front of you.

## 4. Find the Right Practice

For many beginning meditators, using a guided meditation app downloaded to your phone may be the most accessible way to practice. There are many options available, and each will offer subtle variations on common meditations. Select an app and meditation based on your meditation goals:

- The body scan is used for **relaxation** or **tuning in**

- Loving kindness meditation is useful for finding **forgiveness** and **warmth** for others
- Visualization exercises are useful for those who process ideas **visually**

## 5. Watch Your Pace

Either in practicing on your own or guiding a group meditation, make sure to watch your pacing. If you're guiding a practice, find a gentle, slow cadence. Whenever giving an instruction ("observe your breath," "bring your focus to your body," "notice the sounds in the room"), pause to allow time for followers to fully visualize or practice the instruction. These pauses may be as short as 30 seconds, or held for as long as time allows (without letting followers lose focus). In a body scan meditation, for instance, a pause may be 30-45 seconds, but in a resting awareness meditation, we may sometimes pause for several minutes or longer.

## 6. Exit Practice Gently

As you complete a meditation, create a gentle transition out of the meditative headspace for yourself (or your participants, if leading a group) gently. Before resuming activity, end the practice with a few deep, slow breaths and gently begin bringing attention back to the environment -- wiggling fingers or toes, gently stretching, and beginning to notice the sounds of the space around you before opening the eyes and bringing them slowly back into focus.

# Module Notes for Independent Users and Facilitators

In this section, we provide notes for independent users and facilitators on how to make the most of the modules two through four and the associated learning tools.

## Module 2: Loneliness Learning Tools

### Character Profiles: Dealing with Boredom

**Notes for Independent Users:** Do any of these scenarios sound familiar to you? On a piece of paper or notepad, answer the following questions. Take ten to fifteen minutes to reflect and write.

- Can you identify which ways of dealing with boredom might be more productive than others?
- Do you think any of these suggestions might work for you? If so, why do you think they'll work well for you?
- Have you tried any of these suggestions to deal with boredom in the past? Did they work? If not, why do you think they didn't?
- Do these stories give you any new ideas for dealing with your own boredom that aren't stated here? What are they?

**Notes for Facilitators:** Read through these stories with your client or group. If in a group, ask members to take turns reading a scenario out loud. Use the questions for reflection above to stimulate a group discussion.

**Discussion Tip:** If your group participants seem a little shy about answering, start by volunteering your own answers: "Wow, I don't know about you, but I recognized a lot of myself in William!"

### Reflection: How Do I Deal with Boredom?

**Notes for Independent Users:** Getting out a pen and paper, read through the three reflection prompts below. Choose one and respond. Spend at least five minutes writing your reflection.

**Notes for Facilitators:** After reading **Character Profiles: Dealing with Boredom** (slide 54), have your client choose a reflection prompt below.

Spend five minutes each free-writing your own reply. Afterward, spend some time discussing what you both wrote. If you're working with a group: Starting with **Reflection Prompt #1** (slide 65) and working your way through the prompts, ask for volunteers to share their responses. Encourage the rest of the group to chime in with their own ideas, too, even if they didn't write a response to that prompt. Once all who wish to contribute to the prompt have done so, move on to the next question prompt and repeat.

**Discussion Tip:** Remember to maintain a safe, nonjudgmental sharing environment! Feel free to review and use **Module 4 Mindfulness: Learning Tools** for this conversation.

### **Activity: Dealing with Loneliness**

**Notes for Independent Users:** After reading and working through the example above, choose another character and analyze their loneliness in the same way. On a piece of paper or in your journal, choose one or two of the lonely friends we discussed in **Character Profiles: Dealing with Boredom** (slide 54) and create a list of suggestions that might help them with their loneliness and/or boredom. Spend five to ten minutes reflecting and writing your list. Then, going item by item, write a sentence or two explaining why you chose the suggestion based on what you know about the character's situation, interests, and personality. Because you will want to keep in mind what type of loneliness they are experiencing, make sure to read **Types of Loneliness** (slide 25) and **Causes of Loneliness** (slide 31) first.

**Notes for Facilitators:** As an exercise, read Donte's introductory profile and story in **Character Profiles: Dealing with Boredom** (slide 54). Then read through the example above together, pausing at the end to discuss whether you or your client or group have additional suggestions for Donte. Once your client or group is comfortable with the assignment, it's time for them to do it themselves.

**Working with Individual Clients:** Have your client take out a sheet of paper or journal and choose one or two of our lonely friends. After reviewing the character's story in **Character Profiles: Dealing with Boredom** (slide 54), have your client create a list of suggestions that might help that character deal with their loneliness and/or boredom. As they create their list, create one of your own for the same character/characters. Spend five minutes writing, then share your suggestions. Make sure you and your client

say why you chose each suggestion based on what you know about the character's situation, interests, and personality.

**Working with Groups:** If you're facilitating a group, this can be a great group discussion. Have the group select one or two characters (depending on the size of the group; ideally, at least three participants should write suggestions for each chosen character). Then, each group member will write a list of suggestions for one of those chosen characters. Have the group spend five to ten minutes writing their suggestions. Direct them to base their suggestions on what they know about the character's situation, interests, and personality.

After everyone has finished their list, go around the room with each participant sharing a few tips from their list. If discussing more than one character, start by asking all those who wrote suggestions for one character to share, then the other. As participants share, make sure they indicate why they thought those suggestions would be appropriate for the character.

**Alternate assignment:** For groups of seven or less, have each participant select a different character (or assign each participant a different character) to write suggestions for, then use group discussion time for each to present the following to the group:

- Who their character is
- Why the character is lonely
- Their suggestions for alleviating loneliness and/or boredom
- Why they chose these suggestions based on what they know of the character

**Discussion Tip:** Just as there is no single solution that will work best for everyone, encourage your participants to understand that each of their solutions may be valid. We often choose solutions that would likely work well for ourselves.

## **Resource: Assessing Your Loneliness**

**Notes for Independent Users:** This quiz can be taken anytime in the curriculum, but we recommend doing it after completing the lesson **Module 2: Defining Loneliness**. After you've completed the quiz, take a few minutes to reflect on it. Were there any questions that surprised you? Did

any of your answers surprise you? Did you have any insights? Maybe you realized that you may not have a lot of people around, but that you rarely feel isolated. Or perhaps your social network is small, but one person routinely comes to mind when you think of someone who understands you and who you can share your feelings with. If you'd like, take five to ten minutes to journal in your notebook about any takeaways from this exercise.

**Notes for Facilitators:** After your client or group has read the lesson **Module 2: Defining Loneliness**, have them complete the UCLA quiz. It is fairly quick, and should only take them three to five minutes to complete. They can do it on their own before you meet with them or during the meeting itself. Asking your client or group the same questions listed in **Notes for Independent Users** (above) can be a great way to start a discussion about loneliness.

**Discussion Tip:** So that you can guide the conversation with probing questions, make sure to complete the quiz yourself in advance of your meeting. If participants seem shy about discussing their results, that's okay! Sharing your own insights, observations, and surprises from taking the assessment can help prompt them to share their own. Alternatively, have them take five to ten minutes to journal about any insights they have -- that way, they can process their results internally without having to share or worry about judgment from others.

### Knowledge Check: What is Loneliness?

**Notes for Independent Users:** Complete this quiz after finishing all readings in **Module 2: Loneliness**. If you get any answers wrong, that's okay! We covered a lot of information in this lesson. Simply take note of what you missed in your journal or notebook. That way, you can revisit the lessons of the module and see if you can recognize the correct answer.

**Notes for Facilitators:** Have your clients or group complete this quiz after finishing all readings in the module **Module 2: Loneliness**. Have them note any incorrect answers, but let them know that incorrect answers are fine -- they provide excellent learning opportunities. If working with an individual client, consider having a discussion about the quiz, and spending time together to find the correct answers to any missed questions. If you're working with a group, consider reviewing the quiz together. Ask participants to take turns sharing the correct answers to questions one by one. Pause to ask if anyone had questions about the correct answer. If there are, ask the



group why an answer is correct. Then, move on through the rest of the quiz in the same fashion.

## **Character Profiles: Faces of Loneliness**

**Notes for Independent Users:** After finishing the readings in **Module 2: Loneliness** and completing the exercises and reflections in **Module 2: Loneliness Learning Tools** (slide 53) take some time to sit and reflect on the stories told here.

Recording your thoughts in your journal or notebook, reflect on the following questions:

- Does each person seem lonely?
- Knowing what you know about them, are you surprised that any of them experience loneliness?
- If you only viewed them as their neighbors and communities do, would you ever suspect them to be lonely?
- Finally, do you relate strongly to any of these characters, their situations, or the way they feel?

**Notes for Facilitators:** After your clients or groups have finished the readings in **Module 2: Loneliness** and completing the exercises and reflections in **Module 2: Loneliness Learning Tools** (slide 53), have them read these stories as the basis for a conversation on the importance of realizing that loneliness is normal and nothing to be ashamed of.

If working with individual clients, you might read through these profiles together and prompt your client to reflect on the questions listed in **Notes for Independent Users** (above), either as part of a conversation or a journaling activity. Alternatively, you might prompt them to attempt to take a similar 'outsider's perspective' to their own situations as a way to recognize their own hidden strengths or assets.

For groups, consider having members take turns reading stories aloud, pausing after each character's story to consider the questions in **Notes for Independent Users** (above).

## Module 3: Stress Learning Tools

### Knowledge Check: The Effects of Stress

**Notes for Independent Users:** Complete the exercises included in the lesson. Be mindful to draw on everyday stressors rather than traumatic events when asked to recall stressful events.

**Notes for Facilitators:** If working with a group, have participants either take this quiz on their own before your meeting or take five minutes during your meeting to have all participants complete the quiz. Then, ask volunteers to take turns reading questions or true/false statements out loud and ask the group to indicate the correct answers. For each question, allow time to refer back to the associated lesson to discuss why the answer is correct.

If meeting with individual clients, consider completing the knowledge check together, reading each question aloud and prompting the client to select the correct answer. For each answer, return to the associated lesson and read aloud to confirm the answer was correct/incorrect.

### Activity: Identifying Our Stress Fingerprints and Behaviors

**Notes for Independent Users:** Complete the exercises included in the lesson. Be mindful to draw on everyday stressors rather than traumatic events when asked to recall stressful events.

#### **Notes for Facilitators:**

**Potential trigger warning:** this exercise asks participants to recall a time in which they experienced an acute stress and what that stress felt like in their bodies. Instruct participants not to draw from traumatic events for this exercise, but to stick with more everyday, mundane stressors. Workplace situations are often useful examples.

Whether you are working with a group or an individual client, this is an exercise (especially Part 2) that should be done individually or privately. If doing so within a session or meeting, allow ten or fifteen minutes for reflection and writing. If the group or client agrees, reflections can be shared. If so, ensure conversational ground rules are established that nobody judges or ridicules others' behaviors.

## Knowledge Check: What Stressors Are These?

**Notes for facilitators:** If working with a group, ask participants to take turns reading a story out loud. Ask the group what they feel the root cause/stressor is for each character. If there are multiple answers, ask the group to debate between themselves which they feel is the most correct. Ask participants to explain why they feel an answer is correct based upon the **Module 2: Types of Loneliness** (slide 25) and **Module 2: Causes of Loneliness** (slide 31) reading.

## Activity: Name Your Stressors

**Notes for facilitators:** As an out-of-session assignment, have your client or group members use a small notebook to create, keep, and periodically assess their stressors, as described in **Notes for Independent Users** above. Have clients or group members maintain the stress diary for one week (they can continue adding to it beyond, of course). At the end of the week, structure a discussion around the questions listed above.

**Discussion Tip:** For those facilitating client or group discussions, keep your own stress diary as well. In order to create a safe and brave, non-judgmental conversational space, consider sharing insights from your diary to open the conversation.

## Module 4: Mindfulness Learning Tools

### Practice: Tuning-In

**Notes for Independent Users:** Try this simple meditation exercise in a quiet space where you will not be interrupted, either setting a timer for five minutes or simply allowing yourself to remain focused on the meditation until such time you feel ready to end it. Do either as a daily practice or when in need of a break to regain focus or calm.

**Notes for Facilitators:** This simple meditation can either be done in a group or individual setting, or given to your participants or clients as a take-home exercise. If done together, lead the exercise by reading each step aloud, allowing 15-30 seconds between each step. Allow five minutes to complete the exercise. Afterward, ask participants to reflect on what the experience felt like.

## Practice: Deep Breathing Meditation

**Notes for Independent Users:** Belly or deep abdominal breathing is an exercise we can practice when we notice we are becoming upset, anxious, or lonely. We can do it before we get in the car and go to work in the morning, before a meeting, or after someone or something has upset us. It's a great way to literally take a conscious pause before reacting to a stressful or upsetting situation. When you've completed the meditation, reflect upon the following questions in your journal or notebook:

- How did I feel before I did this meditation, physically, mentally and emotionally?
- How do I feel now that I've done the meditation? What's different, or what was the experience like?
- What did I enjoy about this meditation? What did I find useful?
- What was difficult or challenging about this meditation?
- How could I use this meditation in my daily life? Would that be useful to me?

Do this for a few minutes whenever in need of a break to regain focus or calm.

**Notes for Facilitators:** This simple exercise is a quick, useful way to demonstrate the connection between our emotional state (stress response) and physiological state (breathing). Have participants or clients try this exercise in conjunction with the reading **How Mindfulness Works** (slide 56). For discussion, refer to the questions listed in **Notes for Independent Users** (above).

## Practice: Mindful Eating

**Notes for Independent Users:** Try this simple meditation exercise in a quiet space where you will not be interrupted. There's no need to set a strict time limit on the exercise, but try to take your time with each step to really notice the sensations.

The Raisin Meditation is an excellent exercise to practice while you are learning to 'tune in' to your senses. If new to meditation, try it daily for a week, and then periodically as a refresher exercise.

**Notes for Facilitators:** This simple meditation can either be done in a group or individual setting, or given to your participants or clients as a take-home exercise. If done together, lead the exercise by reading each step aloud, allowing up to two minutes between each step. Afterward, ask participants to reflect on what the experience felt like.

## **Practice: Five-Senses Meditation**

**Notes for Independent Users:** The five-senses meditation is an excellent grounding and calming exercise to do outdoors, either sitting quietly or even walking. Try this exercise while taking a short break outdoors at some point during your day. Spend five to ten minutes just noticing the world around you. If you notice your mind wandering back to other thoughts, gently re-focus on your senses. When you've completed the meditation, reflect upon the following questions in your journal or notebook:

- How did I feel before I did this meditation, physically, mentally, and emotionally?
- How do I feel now that I've done the meditation? What's different, or what was the experience like?
- What did I enjoy about this meditation? What did I find useful?
- What was difficult or challenging about this meditation?
- How could I use this meditation in my daily life? Would that be useful to me?

Do either as a daily practice or when in need of a break to regain focus or calm.

**Notes for Facilitators:** This simple meditation can either be done in a group or individual setting, or given to your participants or clients as a take-home exercise. If possible, have your participants or clients go outdoors, finding a place to sit quietly. For groups, consider having participants sit in a circle around you. Make sure everyone can hear your instructions clearly without having to raise your voice. For the primary version of this exercise, allow several minutes for participants to explore each sense. The 5-4-3-2-1 variant is designed to be a much shorter exercise, so you can spend less time with each step.

After completion of the meditation exercise, allow participants five or ten minutes to reflect upon the questions listed in **Notes for Independent Users** (above). If you'd like, these questions may also be used as discussion prompts.

**Facilitation Tip:** After completing a meditation (particularly a longer one), participants or clients may need a few minutes to 'come back out' of the meditation. Give them a few minutes to silently process the experience on their own before beginning a larger discussion or conversation.

## **Module 4: Mindfulness Character Profiles**

**Notes for Independent Users:** After reading the contents of **Module 4: Mindfulness**, read each character profile closely. Writing in your journal or notebook, consider the questions for self-reflection above.

**Notes for Facilitators:** If working with groups, have participants take turns reading a character profile carefully. As the group works through each profile, pause to consider and discuss the following:

- Can I relate to anything about this character's situation?
- Have I tried similar mindfulness strategies or practices?
- If not, does anything stand out as something I might like to try?

Have participants take a few minutes to write in their journal or notebook as they consider each character, but ask for volunteers to share their thoughts with the group. Before moving on to the next character, discuss the 'Why it works' section with the group.