

Collaborating to recognise and address the mental health impacts of loneliness

Dean's story

Dean is a 58-year old father, who has been married to 57-year old Kim for thirty years. He has two children Danielle (26) and James (23).

Danielle moved out of the family home two years ago when she moved overseas for work. James also moved overseas four months ago after seeing how much fun his sister was having. Dean has siblings but since their parents died there has been limited contact.

Dean retired eight months ago after being retrenched from his financial advisor role - a job he held for 35 years - at a big four bank in the city. Because his wife stills works full-time as a midwife, and most of his old workmates and friends are still working, he has been feeling a bit lost. Dean has felt out of sorts mostly at night because Kim has been picking up night shifts since Dean retired to boost their income.

Dean always worked long hours in the bank which has resulted in him having limited to no social networks. The few friends he does have he shares with his wife and due to Kim's night duties they have had to refuse offers to go out with them. Kim says he should go without her but he says he doesn't want to feel the odd one out by going out on his own with other couples.

Dean feels like he can't plan holidays as Kim's work restricts lengthy time away. Kim has noticed that Dean is a bit grumpy lately and when she asks him

what is wrong he snaps at her. Dean has been feeling very flat and all he has to do is walk the dog in the morning and watch sport on television. Dean used to have a few drinks whilst watching sports on the weekend but this has extended into drinking every afternoon whilst he watches Foxtel.

At a regular family GP check-up about Dean's high blood pressure his GP notices that Dean is not his usual self.

Jessica's story

Jess is an 18-year old who has just left year 12 because she is having a baby. Upon hearing she was pregnant Jess' life was turned upside down. She had planned to study nursing at university after school, and feels these hopes are now shattered.

Her boyfriend of 12 months wanted nothing to do with her after she told him she was pregnant and planned to keep the baby. Due to very bad morning sickness Jess has missed a lot of school, leaving her feeling more isolated from her friends. She has been too sick to go out with them recently and has started to notice they've stopped inviting her anyway. She sees everything they do on social media and it is making her feel so sad that she is missing out.

Jess has been fighting with her parents a lot. Due to the tension at five months gestation Jess was told she had to leave school and move to the country to live with her aunty and uncle on their

Continued over...

farm, three hours away from home. Jess' parents have told her she must remain on the farm until she stops breast feeding after which they expect her to put the baby in day care and Jess to get a job.

Jess has been living with her aunty and uncle for two months now and although they are kind she is finding herself frequently sitting in her bedroom crying. The only time she goes out is when they go into town for their weekly shop. They often go into town all day and have lunch and occasionally her aunty will allow some time for window shopping. Most times they just get their stock and groceries and head back to the farm.

Jess isn't excited to have the baby anymore and is constantly asking herself, what have I done?