

# Social Connection & Loneliness — Workbook

This workbook accompanies the Social Connection & Loneliness course and gives you the structured exercises, self-assessments, and planning tools to move from understanding to action. Work through each section after completing the corresponding course module — the exercises build on each other and culminate in a personalised connection plan you can carry forward. Be honest in your answers; this workbook is for your eyes only unless you choose to share it.

## The Science of Loneliness

Establish your baseline by measuring your current loneliness level, identifying your loneliness type, and examining the physiological patterns that may be affecting you.

### Exercise: UCLA-3 Loneliness Baseline

Answer each of the three UCLA-3 items honestly based on how you have felt over the past few weeks. Rate each item: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often. Sum your scores. 3–5 = low loneliness, 6–8 = moderate, 9–12 = high. Record your score and note which items scored highest.

- How often do you feel that you lack companionship? (1=Never, 4=Often)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How often do you feel left out? (1=Never, 4=Often)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How often do you feel isolated from others? (1=Never, 4=Often)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Looking at your highest-scoring item: is it more about having too few people (structural loneliness) or feeling unknown by the people you have (intimate loneliness)?  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Worksheet: Loneliness Type Diagnostic

For each statement below, mark whether it describes you (Yes / Somewhat / No). Use the pattern of responses to determine your primary loneliness type. Structural: you have too few contacts or lack group belonging. Intimate: you have contacts but feel unseen or emotionally alone.

I rarely have someone to call when I want company [Yes / Somewhat / No]  
\_\_\_\_\_

I have contacts but none feel truly close [Yes / Somewhat / No]  
\_\_\_\_\_

I feel disconnected from any group or community [Yes / Somewhat / No]  
\_\_\_\_\_

People in my life do not really know me [Yes / Somewhat / No]  
\_\_\_\_\_

I moved or had a major life change in the last 2 years [Yes / Somewhat / No]  
\_\_\_\_\_

My primary loneliness type (Structural / Intimate / Both):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The one unmet need from the Five Social Needs Framework that resonates most:

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### Checklist: Physiological Loneliness Check-In

- Review your average sleep quality over the past month — note if fragmented or light sleep is a pattern
- Consider whether you notice heightened negativity in interpreting social signals (e.g. reading neutral messages as cold)
- Assess your current stress baseline — elevated cortisol signs include trouble winding down, irritability, and low-grade physical tension
- Identify one lifestyle lever (sleep, exercise, or meditation) you can strengthen this week to reduce physiological loneliness amplification
- Schedule a 10-minute daily decompression ritual (walk, breathwork, or journaling) to reduce HPA axis activation before social interactions

## Mapping Your Social World

Draw your Social Convoy Map, audit each ring for adequacy, and identify the specific people and needs you will target in Modules 3 and 4.

### Exercise: Social Convoy Map

On paper or using the template in this workbook, draw three concentric circles labeled I (inner), II (middle), III (outer). Place yourself at the center. Write each person in your current life in the ring that reflects their current emotional closeness to you — not aspirational closeness, but where things stand today. Then answer the questions below.

- How many people are in your inner circle? (Research suggests 2–5 is healthy — fewer than 2 signals intimate loneliness risk)

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- How many are in your middle ring? (Fewer than 5 signals structural loneliness risk)

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- Name 1–2 people currently in the middle ring you would like to move inward — these become your Module 3 targets

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- Note any ring that feels frozen, shrinking, or dominated by one context (e.g. all work colleagues) — what does this reveal about your current social portfolio?

### Worksheet: Relationship Quality Audit

List your inner-circle and top 3 middle-ring contacts. For each, rate the five quality indicators from 1 (weak) to 5 (strong). Leave the Score column blank — you will fill it in as you complete the rating columns.

Contact name:

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Responsiveness (1–5): does this person notice and care about what matters to you?

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Capitalization (1–5): do they respond enthusiastically to your good news?

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Perceived availability (1–5): would they show up in a crisis?

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Self-disclosure reciprocity (1–5): can you be honest and vulnerable with each other?

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Shared meaning (1–5): do you have rituals, history, or narrative together?

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Overall relationship quality score (leave blank — sum manually):

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One specific action to strengthen the weakest dimension for this contact:

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### Checklist: Barrier Identification Checklist

- Identify your primary external barrier: geographic isolation / work schedule / caregiving / disability / financial constraint / cultural mismatch
- Identify your primary internal barrier: social anxiety / avoidant attachment / shame / perfectionism / hypervigilance from past rejection
- Identify whether you have access to third places (cafes, parks, clubs, community centers) within practical reach
- Note one small behavioral activation step you can take this week to act against the pull of your primary internal barrier
- Flag whether your social media usage is primarily active (messaging, commenting) or passive (scrolling) — passive usage is a loneliness amplifier to reduce

## Building Deeper Connections

Practice the specific conversation, vulnerability, and maintenance behaviors that move relationships from surface-level contact to genuine closeness.

### Exercise: Progressive Disclosure Practice

Choose one person from your Module 2 target list (someone you want to move inward). Plan and conduct one 30-minute conversation with them using Social Penetration Theory as a guide. Before the conversation, prepare one intermediate-layer disclosure (a genuine opinion, a mild struggle, something you actually care about) to introduce naturally. After the conversation, answer the reflection prompts.

- What intermediate-layer disclosure did you share? Did the other person reciprocate at a similar depth or stay surface-level?

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- Which EARS listening element (Engage, Absorb, Reflect, Summarize) did you find most difficult to sustain? What got in the way?

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- Did you notice any shift in perceived closeness during or after the conversation? Describe what changed.

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- What would you disclose in a follow-up conversation to continue the deepening?

### Worksheet: Attachment Style Reflection

Use the four attachment style descriptions below to identify your likely primary style. Then complete the reflection fields. Note: this is a reflection exercise, not a clinical assessment — take the ECR-R online for a validated result.

My likely attachment style (Secure / Anxious-preoccupied / Dismissive-avoidant / Fearful-avoidant):

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Three specific behaviors I exhibit that reflect this style:

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How this style currently affects my ability to deepen relationships:

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One secure-attachment behavior I can deliberately practice in my next 3 social interactions (e.g. staying present instead of withdrawing, not seeking reassurance, expressing a need directly):

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Name of one person in my life who seems securely attached — how might I spend more time with them?

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## Checklist: Friendship Maintenance Action List

- Identify 5–7 people you want to maintain regular contact with — write their names on the Connection Maintenance Tracker template
- Send one unprompted reach-out this week with no agenda beyond connection (voice note, text, or call)
- Practice one active-constructive response to good news — celebrate enthusiastically before pivoting to any concerns
- Follow up on something specific a friend mentioned last time you spoke — show you remembered
- Plan (not just suggest) one social event in the next 30 days with an inner-circle or target middle-ring person
- Express appreciation to one person directly and specifically this week — name what you value about them

## Exercise: Vulnerability Risk Assessment

Brene Brown's research shows that selective vulnerability with the right people builds trust, while indiscriminate vulnerability can be harmful. Before making a deeper disclosure, evaluate the target relationship using the prompts below.

- Has this person demonstrated consistent responsiveness to smaller disclosures in the past?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Do they handle other people's struggles with empathy or with judgment and advice-giving?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Is the relationship reciprocal — do they also share genuine struggles with you?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Based on your answers: is this a safe relationship to go deeper with right now, or does it need more reciprocal trust-building first?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Building Community and a Sustainable Connection Life

Design your weekly connection routine, identify community entry points, and build the long-term systems that will sustain social health through life transitions.

### Exercise: Third Place Discovery

Your task is to identify three potential third places within your current life context and take a first-entry action for at least one of them within the next two weeks. Use the prompts to guide your thinking.

- List three recurring-activity groups, skill-based communities, or service organizations in your area that align with a genuine interest — not what you think you should enjoy, but what you actually do  
\_\_\_\_\_
- For each option: what is the practical barrier to attending once? (cost, schedule, not knowing anyone) — and what is the minimum action to reduce that barrier?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Which one would you attend even if you knew no one would talk to you the first time? That is your entry point — consistency matters more than first-impression quality  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Commit to attending your chosen third place at least 5 times before evaluating whether it is working — write the first 5 dates here  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Worksheet: Weekly Connection Architecture

Design your weekly connection routine using the four-tier framework from the course. Fill in specific behaviors, people, and times for each tier. Be realistic — under-promise to yourself and build consistency before adding volume.

Daily contact habit (what, with whom, when in the day): \_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Weekly dedicated social activity (what, with whom, which day): \_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Monthly intentional deepening (what, with whom, target date): \_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Quarterly community or group event (what, which month): \_\_\_\_

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Connection maintenance list (names of 5–7 people, one per line): \_\_\_\_

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Habit stack anchor: I will do my daily contact habit AFTER I \_\_\_\_ (existing habit)

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One friction-reducing change I will make this month (e.g. schedule events in advance, turn off passive social media at set times): \_\_\_\_

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### Checklist: Resilience and Long-Game Checklist

- Accept that losing 50% of your friend network every 7 years is a normal structural feature — not a personal failure
- After any major life transition, update your convoy map within 30 days to reflect the new reality rather than grieving the old one in isolation
- Practice one ACT defusion technique when a rejection thought arises: label it as 'the rejection story' and observe it without fusing with it
- Use the 10-10-10 rule for the next social setback: will it matter in 10 minutes / 10 months / 10 years?
- Commit to the compounding asset mindset: every small connection deposit this week matters more than it feels like it does
- Review your convoy map and connection routine every 6 months and adjust for life changes

### Your Action Plan

1. Complete the UCLA-3 loneliness baseline today and identify your primary loneliness type (structural vs intimate)
2. Draw your Social Convoy Map and count each ring — flag any deficit (inner < 2, middle < 5)
3. Choose 1–2 middle-ring targets to deepen over the next 90 days — write their names
4. Identify your primary internal barrier to connection and commit to one small behavioral activation step this week
5. Conduct one progressive-disclosure conversation with a target contact within the next 7 days
6. Set up your 4-tier weekly connection architecture in your calendar — book the first monthly deepening event now
7. Identify your top third-place candidate and attend it once within 14 days
8. Build your connection maintenance list of 5–7 names and send one unprompted reach-out this week
9. Send one active-constructive response to good news within the next 3 days — practice the behavior deliberately
10. Schedule a 6-month convoy map review to sustain the practice long-term









