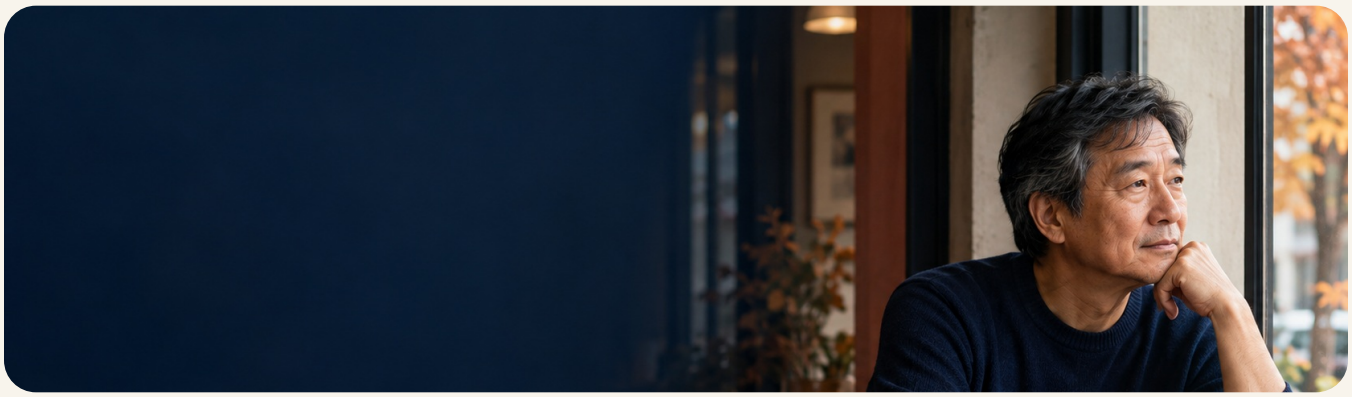
Lonely Doesn’t Mean Go Back



Session 09

A 60-minute adult education session about connection, safe distance and a request that fits real life.

The work today

Identify the kind of connection you miss, choose an appropriate route and practice a specific invitation with a fallback.

Progress is progress

One honest invitation or one question about a community option can matter before a new friendship exists.

Before you lead

Audience and scope

Adults 18+, approximately 4-10 participants. Facilitators need group skills, competence appropriate to their role, and access to safeguarding and emergency procedures. This is original recovery education, not a validated treatment, diagnosis, crisis service or substitute for individual care.

Preparation outside the hour

Read the guide and notes. Print participant pages 1-8, prepare slides, pens and a clock, and verify local support contacts. Orient new members beforehand. Explain the setting’s privacy limits; group confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Know how to offer private support.

Participation and access

Offer fiction, private writing, drawing, listening or passing. Read prompts aloud and offer a scribe with consent. No personal history, diagnosis, substance details, contact, movement, performance or completed worksheet is required. Adapt for language, disability, energy, caregiving and resources.

Topic-specific preparation

Keep the focus on voluntary safe connection. Do not encourage contact with unsafe people or anyone who has requested no contact. Prepare verified local options for participants without a trusted person, phone or transport.

The 60-minute run sheet

00-05 / Welcome / slides 1-2

Participant page 1. Explain choices and offer a brief optional check-in.

05-13 / Fictional situation / slides 3-4

Participant page 2. Read the example and discuss the stated questions. Avoid a round of personal histories.

13-23 / Teaching and model / slides 5-6

Use page 3 to distinguish kinds of connection, then model Ari’s invitation and access check on page 2.

23-38 / Individual work / slides 7-8

Participant pages 3-5, about five minutes per page. Read prompts and offer private help with consent.

38-50 / Rehearsal / slides 9-10

Page 6 pair or solo practice. Page 7 is a creative alternative within the same block. Two minutes setup, three minutes each role, two minutes revision, two minutes reflection.

50-57 / Actual-week step / slide 11

Revisit page 5. Add timing, access, support and a fallback. No public promise or pledge.

57-60 / Close / slide 12

Offer optional page 8 follow-up and a voluntary takeaway or pass. State actual continuing support and its limits.

Opening words

Suggested script

Sometimes you miss the people. Sometimes you miss being expected somewhere. You can want company without wanting every part of an old situation back. Today we are getting more specific about what is missing and what kind of connection could fit now.

Group agreements

No pressure to reconcile, date, disclose recovery or exchange contacts. Do not treat friendship as a reward for sobriety. Respect no-contact requests and restrictions. Ask before suggesting a group, belief community or activity.

Check-in

Ask: Would you rather think about conversation, shared activity, being around people, or simply listen today? Passing is welcome. No public count of friends or family.

Ari’s quiet Sunday

Original fictional scenario

Ari misses having somewhere to go on Sunday. An old group sends an invitation, but the plans include substance use Ari wants to avoid. Ari thinks, If I turn this down, I have nobody. A former coworker has been friendly, and a local community activity might be an option, but Ari has not checked its schedule or access.

Questions

What kind of connection might Ari miss? What is known about the invitation? What other option could be checked without promising a friendship? What if the first invitation receives a no?

Facilitator stance

Missing people is understandable. We do not decide that all past friends are unsafe or that Ari must cut everyone off. Use Ari’s stated goal and circumstances. Do not frame return to an unsafe situation as the price of belonging.

The kind of connection I miss

Name the missing part

Conversation, practical company, shared humor, a familiar place, or being included can mean different things. A quieter activity may fit one need and not another. There is no single correct social life.

Choose the distance

A brief message, an activity in a suitable public setting, an appropriate peer group, or a question to a worker about options can be a first step. Safety, privacy, access and the other person’s choice still matter.

Allow a real answer

A request can receive no, later or no response. That does not tell the whole story of someone’s worth or future connection. Use a fallback rather than repeated pressure or an unsafe visit.

A completed example

Ari’s specific need

Ari wants company and a place to feel included. The old invitation does not fit Ari’s current goal. Ari can decline without explaining recovery.

A possible invitation

Would you like to have coffee or talk for twenty minutes Tuesday after work? No problem if that time does not fit. Ari checks cost, transport and the coworker’s availability.

A fallback

If unavailable, Ari can ask a suitable worker about a community option, checking hours, cost, access and whether it fits. No group or person is guaranteed to be available or appropriate.

Lead the individual pages

Page 3 / What is missing?

Separate the specific need for connection from a particular past setting. Do not require a personal loneliness story.

Page 4 / A connection at the right distance

Check fit and access without assuming every group, family member or online space is safe. Help identify a suitable inquiry if options are absent.

Page 5 / An invitation with room for an answer

Include timing and an appropriate fallback. Respect the other person’s choice and no-contact limits.

Support without taking over

Ask permission before suggesting. Keep unresolved needs visible. A resource gap or an unfinished page needs curiosity and appropriate practical support, not a lecture about motivation. Participants may stay with the fictional example.

Practice without a performance

12-minute sequence

Two minutes to choose pair or solo; three minutes each role; two minutes to revise; two minutes to reflect. Partners use fiction. The creative alternative replaces this practice, not extra time.

Speaker role

Use Ari to practice one bounded invitation or an inquiry to a suitable service.

Listener role

Give a neutral no or different-time response. Comment on clarity and whether the request allows a real choice. Do not stage a personal rejection, tease or insult the speaker.

Solo option

Write the invitation, add room for an answer and choose a fallback without sending it.

My connection map

Same practice block

Map options at different distances: a trusted person if available, a possible activity, or an appropriate support inquiry. This replaces pair practice.

Example

Near: a suitable existing support contact. Possible: a public activity to check. Needs checking: hours, access and privacy. No actual names are required.

Reflection

Which route addresses the need? What remains unknown? Does the map assume resources or relationships someone may not have?

Privacy and choice

No one must show the page, read aloud, send a message, revisit a distressing memory or complete the activity. Offer the fictional example, neutral drawing, observation or a pass.

When more support is needed

Unsafe relationships or contact

Do not use this session to test a dangerous relationship, bypass a no-contact request or restriction, or pressure reconciliation. Offer appropriate private specialist support when needed.

Digital and community options

Check privacy, legitimacy, moderation and actual fit before sharing sensitive information or attending. The group does not guarantee safety or availability. A referral inquiry can be a first step.

Loneliness and distress

If loneliness comes with increasing distress or difficulty functioning, offer appropriate professional or recovery support. Immediate safety concerns take priority. Do not present company or a hobby as sufficient care for every situation.

Close and prepare the pilot

Closing words

What kind of connection would be useful, and what is one route you could check? You can pass. A small invitation can count even when the answer is not what you hoped. Progress is progress. Mile or a Millimeter.

Voluntary feedback

Was the activity understandable? Could you find a realistic next action or question? What felt uncomfortable, inaccessible or unrealistic? Check timing and access. Do not collect sensitive personal stories for marketing or treat feedback as evidence of clinical effectiveness.

Sources and authorship

Broad background sources are listed in Sources-and-Review.md and relevant slide notes. Reviewed October 28, 2026. Original scenarios, scripts and learning sequence by Belle Morey / Progress is Progress LLC. No agency endorsement.

Release status

Author-review pilot. Belle’s review, appropriate professional review, local response and referral checks, and a suitable timing and usefulness pilot should precede commercial release. www.progresscounselingprograms.com.