

10/12/2014

Acts of Kindness Can Cure Loneliness, Say Counsellors

The public can end the affliction of loneliness this Christmas through simple acts of kindness, according to the Irish Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (IACP).

The IACP, which has almost 4,000 members and is the main body for counselling and psychotherapists in Ireland, said that most people affected by loneliness during the festive season are the elderly, many of whom live in rural areas.

The organization said that simple acts, such as calling in for a short chat and a cup of tea, can make an immense difference to people who are suffering from loneliness.

“People suffer from loneliness all year round, but at Christmas time these feelings can get much worse because for most people it is a time of happiness, reunions and celebration,” said IACP spokesman Shane Kelly.

“We can all help each other when it comes to loneliness – If you are aware of a neighbour or family member that may be alone, consider inviting them over for a chat, dinner or to share in a family event as they may be too shy to ask.

“Alternatively call around to their house, especially in the evenings, and check if they need any help with small chores like getting fuel for the fire. This can make all the difference,” he added.

Mr Kelly pointed out that there was a clear link between loneliness and depression and said that the festive period can lead to more people experiencing anxieties or feeling depressed.

Therefore, the IACP also advised that people who live on their own should not isolate themselves and accept invitations from their family and friends to attend events.

“Consider joining a local group or volunteering for a charity,” Mr Kelly added. “This will get you out of the house and can be a great way to meet like-minded people. It will also make you feel good by helping others.

Staying in good health is also vital for people living on their own. The IACP advises that people in this situation should avoid drinking too much, take regular exercise, eat well and get as much fresh air and daylight as possible.

“Exercise and eat well and don’t neglect your health - this will help to improve your mood and your outlook. If being alone is unavoidable at Christmas, then make a plan for your day of nice things that you enjoy – such as walking, watching movies or eating your favourite meal,” Mr Kelly said.

Most importantly, the IACP said that those who feel lonely at Christmas should not suffer in silence.

“Don’t bottle up these feelings, Talk about your feelings to family or friends or consider contacting a caring professional such as a counsellor or psychotherapist. Talking and sharing these feelings is the first step to better mental health,” Mr Kelly added.

For a list of accredited counsellors and psychotherapists in your area, visit www.iacp.ie

ENDS

For more information, contact Richard Brophy, OHC on 086 385 3260 / email: rbrophy@ohcpr.ie

About the IACP:

Established in 1981, the IACP identifies, develops and maintains professional standards of excellence in counselling and psychotherapy through education, training and accreditation. In promoting best

practice and the professional development of its members, IACP holds at its core the protection of the public. Representing both the interests of clients and practitioners, IACP provides a telephone referral helpline, an information service; and an online counsellor / psychotherapist / supervisor directory. IACP is a registered Charity (CHY 6615).