



# *Wisdom*

on Living with Loneliness

**Eldercare**  
peace of mind

- From Eldercare Residents -





This booklet is a collection of real-life stories from residents. Alongside stories of the wisdom, knowledge and skills that have assisted residents, themes of grief, sadness and pain are referenced in some sections. Please exercise care when reading the booklet.

**Eldercare**  
peace of mind

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## Introduction.

We recognise that all of us live with loneliness at some points in our lives, some of us more than others. There are particular times in life when the loneliness might impact us more. For some, this includes the experience of moving into residential aged care.

Throughout the course of our lives, we have developed some wisdom, skills, knowledge and insight about living with loneliness. All of us have different stories to share about what has helped us through times of loneliness or protected us from them.

We hope that the stories in this booklet might assist others who are living in aged care and those who are living with loneliness in their day-to-day lives, wherever they are in life. We hope you feel less alone in your experiences.

## Loneliness is like a plant with thorns.

### Questions for reflection

What is loneliness to you?

What does it look like, feel like, sound like?

Are there particular times when loneliness is, or has been, more present in your life?



## Loneliness can move and come about at different times.

Loneliness is different for everyone. Loneliness can move and happen at different times. We all have different ways of responding to loneliness.

One of us described loneliness as a flexible thing: “It is like a plant with thorns that pinch and poke you at some times more than others.” Another said plainly: “Loneliness sucks. There is no nice way of putting it.”

For some, when we think of the experience of loneliness, we think of the ways it intermingles with the isolation that some of us experience during times of change, grief or illness:

- “It is difficult because people have kept on dying. A lot of people who have been my friends are not available because they have passed away.”
- “My children have been explorers and travellers, and that really is my own fault as I encouraged them saying ‘that would be marvellous!’ but then I am left lonely and on the ground.”

## Nights can be like a black hole.


For many of us, nights are difficult times. One of us said: “Nights are like a black hole – it doesn’t seem like anyone is there. The worst thing is when you can’t get to sleep.”

We find small ways to respond to and cope with the long nights:

- “I try to think about how I have coped throughout the day that has just gone and about all the different things that I have done.”
- “Playing music to get to sleep helps distract you from thoughts you shouldn’t be thinking.”
- “Loneliness can be coupled with fear. Sometimes it can feel like a scary shadowy thing. It helps to put the light on at those times.”
- “When I feel lonely at night, I put the light on and say a prayer.”



“It still is lonely at night,  
and I still pray for my  
daughter, son and staff.  
The early hours when I  
can’t sleep are the hardest  
sometimes. This is when  
I would love someone to  
talk to. When I have time  
in the evenings alone, it  
would be nice if the staff  
could just pop in and ask  
how I am, just for a minute  
or two. This would make a  
huge difference.”



## Reflecting on loneliness from long ago and recent times.

“I remember times of loneliness both a little bit from a long ago and a little bit from recent times. I was only 19 when I was first married and in those days many women stayed at home while their husbands left for work. I didn’t have a telephone or vehicle to drive and visit others. I visited my neighbours a little, but other than that, I spent all that time on my own. I only felt less lonely once I had a baby to care for! All these years later, now I find myself on my own again.”





## Cultivating a home away from home.

### Questions for reflection

Are there particular ways in which you have brought 'homeliness' into your life?

What homely places or practices have been sustaining and comforting for you during times of loneliness?

## Adjusting to a new home.

One of us reflected that in coming into aged care: "I have had to come to terms with the fact that this is not my home. It's not. It never will be." Lots of simple things remind us of this, like sleeping on a single bed for the first time in decades – one of us said: "I have a fear of falling off the bed!" Even though some might not call aged care 'home', we find many ways to make it homely.





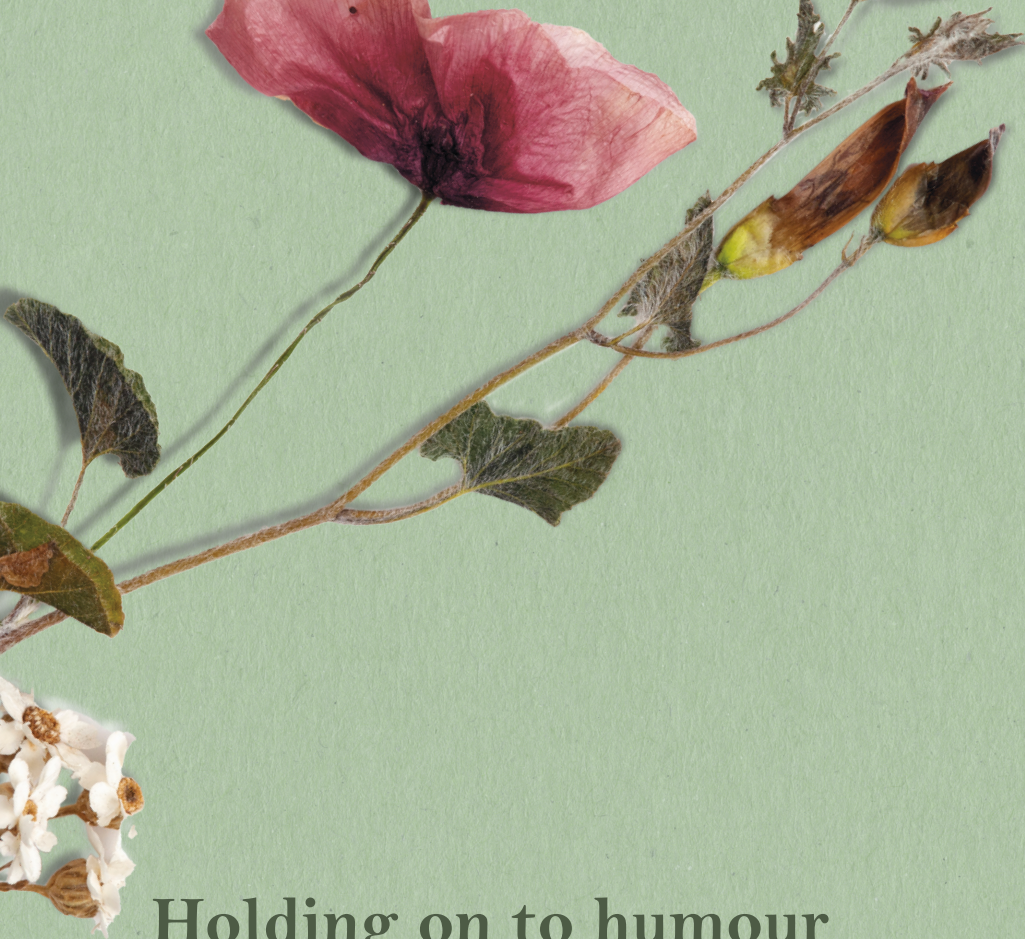
## I ask guests to join me in my garden.

"I take ownership of this space and what is in front of me. My room has become my castle. It is like a home away from home. When people visit me at Eldercare, I ask them to join me in 'my garden' or 'my pergola'. Feeling a sense of ownership in this garden gives me a sense of agency and possession. This is what I used to do at home – I sat under the pergola in my garden and listened to the birds. I hold on to my watering can to get me through the times of loneliness – it means everything."

## My room is my holy place.

"My room is my house. It is my holy place. I have more confidence in being here now and can hold on to my ideals and my stubbornness, as I feel a sense of acceptance and have stopped blaming others."





## Holding on to humour and wit.

### Questions for reflection

How has humour, wit or laughter been good company for you in times of loneliness or loss?

Are there particular things or memories that make you smile or laugh?



## Let's just go back to our 'motel' rooms.

"When I am in my room and feeling a bit lonely, I just start to go for a walk and find someone to talk to. A few of us have got into a little group now and have coffee together. Our little group laughs and often says when we finish: 'let's all just go back to our motel rooms now.' It changes the way we think about living here and needing assistance from staff and carers."





## I love to carry on with my friends.

“Humour has always been important to me. I love to carry on with my friend when we are playing cards together. She makes me laugh and tells me that she has always been doing ‘stupid and funny things, even when she was a little tiny thing’. What her humour brings me is just beautiful. I have got some lovely friends.”

## Skills of wit, evasion and laughter.

“When I worked at a large department store I learned the skills of wit and evasion! There were people that would come in regularly and I just didn’t get on with some of them. I would see them on their way over and quickly say ‘I need the toilet’ or ‘I’ve lost my hankie’. This makes me laugh now. I have a friend that comes in to see me now that I am living in aged care. His mother was my neighbour, and we’ve known each other for “donkey’s years”. When he pokes his head in the door to say good morning I say with a laugh, ‘Oh get lost!’”

## At least I can still laugh.

“Humour is so important to me. Some mornings when I wake up, I think to myself – ‘not again!’ Then I tell myself with a laugh – ‘get on with it, I am still here.’ I try to get myself motivated through other people. Sometimes I remember people who used to make me laugh, like my Uncle Fred. Growing up, Uncle Fred had us laughing from morning ‘til night. At this stage of my life I think, at least I can still laugh”.





## The company of others.

### Questions for reflection

Have there been people, pets, characters or other figures in your life who have supported you through times of loneliness? If so what, did they do? And what would they do if they were with you now?

## Friends who took me by the hand.

“When I first moved here, I was a nervous wreck. I felt frightened and shy. I made two friends who took me by the hand and showed me what was what. When I was not sure what was happening or when a question came up, they would sit behind me and just lean in to tell me quietly what was going on and what I could say. They have done everything to help me. When I first moved here, I didn’t mix that well with others, now I am fighting fit.”





“Friends are positive  
and my Christian faith is  
important to me.”



“My family makes  
sure that they ring up  
during the evening meal,  
knowing that this will  
make a difference.”



“I get lonely most at  
night, when my husband  
has gone home. I wait for  
God and for my husband!”

**I’ve loved the company of  
pets and am never lonely  
with books.**

“When my husband died, the family decided I should have a budgie, and that budgie became my companion. I taught him tricks. He would get out of the cage, and I would be scrambling after him. He kept me busy. I also had a very loved dog who was always sitting next to me. While I cannot bring my bird or dog into aged care, I can bring myself.

I started to read and books then became my companion. Not that I didn’t want to be with people, but I was never lonely with books. Now that I cannot read as much, I sit quietly in my room and think about things. I don’t moan. I have learnt to cope. Some days are better than others. I’ve known what it is to have children and to bring them up. I’ve loved the company of pets – the budgie and dog. Now I enjoy programs on TV.”





# What saved me from loneliness was my grandfather.

"I was an only child; my parents divorced and I grew up with my aunt. What saved me from loneliness was my grandfather, who thought I was the 'cat's meow'! He would brush my hair and take me to the library after school. He would also come to meet me and my friends and take us to town. He put me through art school. He thought I was a 'pearler'! Grandpa knew loneliness himself. I think I was a blessing to him because I was always available and we would do things together."

## Small connections and practices make a big difference.

### Questions for reflection

What small skills, knowledges, lessons or values have you held onto, to get you through times of loneliness?

What would you name this skill, knowledge or value?

Can you think of a story about this skill, knowledge, or value: a story about a time when this has made a difference to you or others?





## Small connections that make a lot of difference.

For many of us the small connections and conversations make such a big difference to our day to day lives.

- “Connections with staff matter a lot, it makes such a lot of difference. For example, this morning they were getting me up and out of bed and discussing eggs. One of the carers told me that they had five or six eggs every day! This seems like a small conversation, but it makes a lot of difference.”
- “My friends here tease me, they say that I am a ‘lovable character, but no angel!’ When they walk past me, they ask me ‘are you still in charge?’ I was used to being in charge in my working life and I think that it is important for people to feel in charge of something.”
- “I am grateful for the chart about what activities are here at Eldercare every day.”
- “I lived near Globe Derby and would walk 4km per day. I am a Trotting girl. I still have the horses on television all the time and this reminds me of what is important to me.”
- “I try to look at my mother’s life and compare how different my life was. This helps me to feel more gratitude.”
- “I don’t think I will ever adapt to living in aged care. I love wide open spaces. In saying that, I still do like being in the sunshine and don’t mind reading National Geographic. I have enough to keep me going.”

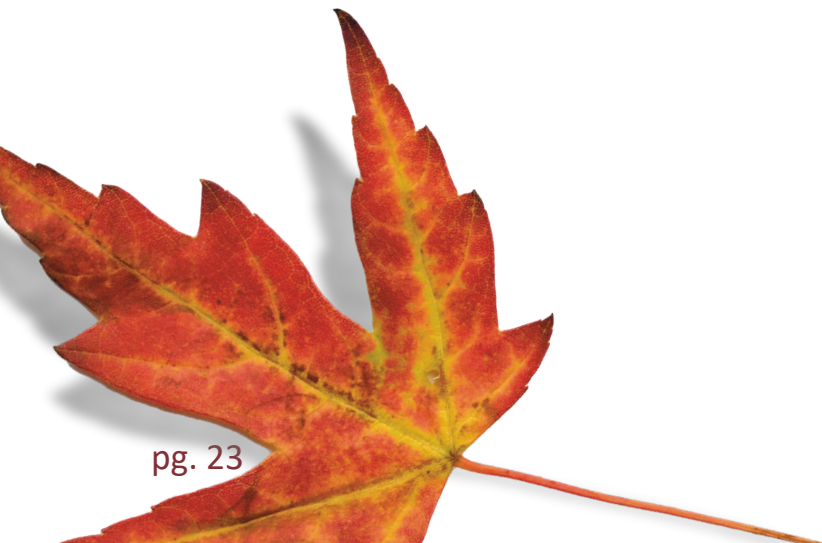


## Communication goes a long way.

“Treat your carers like you would like to be treated. Have patience. I try my hardest, but I don’t have a great deal myself. In aged care you have people working from many different nationalities. Communication skills can sometimes be difficult both ways. Good communication goes a long way with a happy working relationship.”

## The importance of a hug now and then.

“I value the importance of a hug now and again, we often don’t get the chance for that. It affirms me as a person.”







## It's a different life with hearing aids.

"Recently I got hearing aids and I would say to others: 'Believe me. Go and get them if you are deaf!' It's a loneliness that was instantly gone. It's a different life. I wouldn't think hearing aids could make such a difference in my life."

## Holding on to good memories.

"I feel lonely when I think about those I have lost. I try to think about the person who has passed away and think about the good memories. I hold on to photographs."

## Photos help.

"Photos of my family around my room are so important to me. When I first moved in, there were a few weeks when I didn't have any photos on my wall, and I did not like this. Photos help you think about the good memories and what you've done in your life."



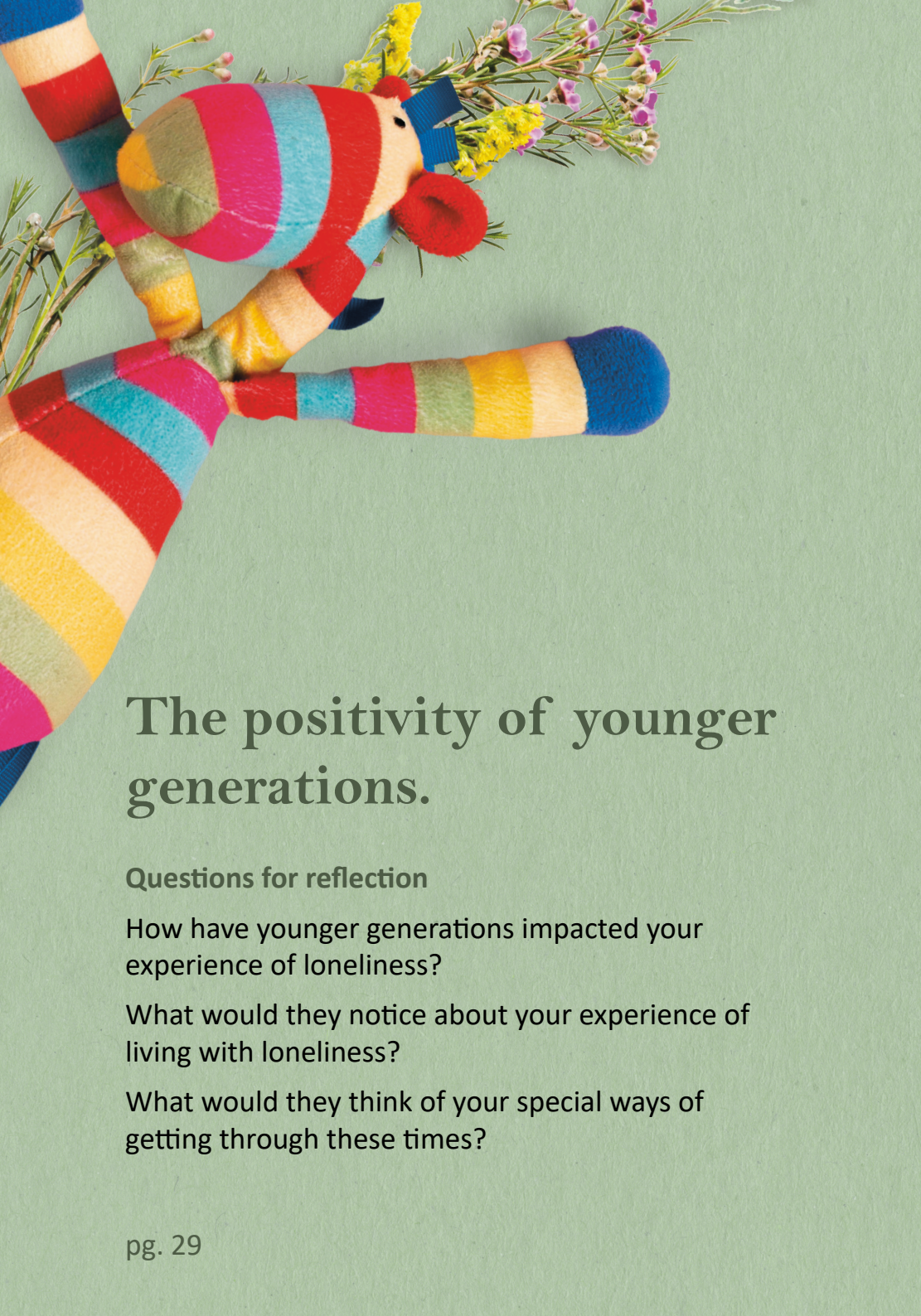


## When in doubt, I always have the telephone!

"I haven't had many experiences of loneliness. I grew up with lots of cousins, uncles and aunties. I got married and had friends from work and from school. I have two children in Adelaide. And I always have the telephone! Television is company for me too now. I haven't had many severe changes in my life and haven't been put under much strain. I didn't talk much when I first moved into aged care, but listen to me now – you don't have a choice!"

"For me, loneliness is a feeling. If I am thinking about things that get right in to your heart, I decide deliberately to not think about these things – but this is not always easy. I try not to wait for it to go away, but to do something. Even little things like thinking of a list of what I have to buy at the shop or stopping my thinking by going to sleep."





## The positivity of younger generations.

### Questions for reflection

How have younger generations impacted your experience of loneliness?

What would they notice about your experience of living with loneliness?

What would they think of your special ways of getting through these times?

## Can we have a ride on your walker?

- “My granddaughter comes in every Wednesday, and I have a close bond with her. This really brightens my week.”
- “I think it is important to reassure young people that there is hope. Even those of us who are in aged care have developed new friends and a love for each other – we call each other our Eldercare family.”
- “My granddaughter never says, ‘poor Mimi’ but instead ‘c’mon Mimi, you can do it!’ Her positivity is a completely different mindset.”








Extended  
stories.






## The loneliness of thinking I had lost my faith and finding God in the trees.

“I was brought up in high church Anglican. It was high mass and I never understood a word! Although I did love the pageantry, the bowing, and scraping and saying the creeds, my parents couldn’t make me go and I left in my teens. When I got married, I lived in a house along the Torrens River in Adelaide. I would always look out at the trees from my window. There were tonnes of them. I would look out at the trees and think how God made everything. I thought – this must be where God lives, in the trees. I love trees.

Later, my husband was diagnosed with an illness and was not given much time to live. He lasted three weeks. At that time, he didn’t believe in anything. I would always say to him – ‘in itself that is a belief, that you don’t believe!’ After his diagnosis, my husband said – ‘Lets go to church’.





When I came into aged care, my young faith came with me. But, if you're away from the fire, the embers die. That to me was loneliness. I thought I had lost my faith, and I have never felt so alone in all my life. I tried a couple of times to go to church. I would repeat church verses and the creeds that were institutionalised from my childhood.

Talking today about my love for trees and my thought that God must live in the trees, reminds me of how I used to watch the clouds and determine which way they moved so that I could hang my washing in the best place to catch the breeze. I often thought that God was blowing the clouds to give me a sign.

I have recently reconnected with the garden and the carers have been able to push my wheelchair outside for walks. Now I can feel the plants, touch and smell things, like a sensory garden. This connects me back to God. My faith has changed though; now I feel the importance of having other people around me at Eldercare as they are the ones I connect with each day."





## The patience and kindness in ‘cocooning’ myself.

“Throughout my life I have tended to push everything away and ‘cocoon’ myself. I come from a background that was abusive and had a dominating person who kept tabs on me. I tended to pull away and I think I might have created my own loneliness. But now, thinking more about how I cocooned myself, I can see this ‘pulling away’ as me seeking total protection – I didn’t want to be hurt.

When I was 68, I had a stroke while at work. I lost my confidence. I lost a whole lot of stuff, which I didn’t fully appreciate at the time. Suddenly I had to be on the receiving end, it was a ‘changing over’ for me. I had to slow down. I had time to breathe. I had time to think. These were things that I had never done. I had to learn everything again – learn to see, to talk, to walk. I also had to recover my memory and did this very slowly and even now, I can fill in parts of the blank spots but not all, and I have had to accept this. In these times I had to come back again to humour and let my competitiveness come out. I was very lucky I had good support people.






Slowly I let people in, because I learned that I needed help. They let me redevelop. They saw me.

When I first came into aged care, I knew a few of the staff from my working life. I felt embarrassed. From my professional life, I knew what was going on with my health. I am more aware of when I am doing the 'cocooning' now. There was a time when I would not join in anything. After a time, I thought to myself, 'If you're not going to be involved, it's going to be like this for the rest of your life!'

Now, my friends here reflect on the way they see how I value people and how they feel and think. One of my friends recognised how I quietly do things to help people. It's the little things, like noticing when someone in a wheelchair needs a push so they are a bit closer to the table. When I had the stroke, I had to give myself time, I kept saying to myself, 'It's OK. It's OK'. This is still important to me to this day. I would say to others who are moving into aged care: 'Be patient, be kind to yourself.' I think we are not kind to ourselves, and it is important to value yourself like you value others. If you're tired, have a sleep. You can say no to something. It's OK."



A close-up photograph of a pond with lily pads and a small frog. The lily pads are green and have prominent veins. A small, dark-colored frog is visible on one of the lily pads. The water is dark and reflects the light.

## Throwing life assumptions out of the window.

“Moving into aged care made me throw a whole set of assumptions about my life out of the window. Over my career I have been a teacher and principal of schools. What I perceived to be good educational practice is what I have tried to translate to my personal life. Here, in aged care, I do a lot of that. I reflect on my personal life and the feelings that come with that. I try to face the reality of my situation that I don’t necessarily accept as real. It is important for me to understand reality.

I have become more familiar with the ways of functioning here in aged care, what the organisational constraints are, the institutional norms and what is acceptable and what is not. There are behaviours that we are expected to follow. We are prescribed our options for breakfast, lunch and dinner. There are formalities to follow. As residents, we need to be able to assert ourselves when things need addressing. Having someone to speak with about our concerns is very important.





In aged care, I cannot just zip out in my car or dip into my wallet and buy what I want. If you lived at home, you are in command of your own timeframe. I try to still hold on to the things that I value. You obviously cannot hold on to everything as you're living in a different environment. I ask myself: 'what do I subsume and what do I let go?' I have always been extroverted, demonstrative and high energy. While I cannot run around my 35-acre property with no clothing on, I can still be outlandish when I want to be. I am comfortable in my own skin and have a strong central core."











“My grandkids ask me: ‘Can we have a ride on your walker?’ And one of them has taken pictures of herself with my walking stick. They see things as a positive. One of my grandkids even called me ‘Boho Chic’ the other day. I laughed, even though I was not really sure what that even meant!”





## Connections with nature.

### Questions for reflection

Have there been places in nature or small interactions with nature that have been sustaining to you in times of loneliness?

What has nature helped you keep in touch with that might not have been possible otherwise? Maybe possibilities, wishes or hopes for your life?

## Clouds bring me calmness.

"I have lived through some difficult times and lost so many friends and family, especially when I think back to the war. When I feel this sadness and loss I like to watch the clouds. I love the clouds and have so since I was a child. The park was not far from my house and I was always on the swings. I have started to watch the clouds again since I came here to Eldercare. I like the patterns in the clouds and the way they bring me calmness."







“My friends and I sit in the garden and enjoy having coffee under the tree and chatting away. One of us had our family come to visit and decided that it was so lovely under the tree in the courtyard that instead of going out for dinner we got fish and chips and sat here under the tree and had a bottle of wine together!”





## Living in aged care is a big adjustment.

### Questions for reflection

What has been important for you to hold on to during times of significant adjustment?

What message of support might you pass on to someone else who is trying to adjust to living in residential aged care?

## Thinking of the lovely things.

"I have always said 'I am never going into aged care!' but when I had this last fall, I said to my children, 'You're going to have to try and find me somewhere in aged care.' They were shocked and said, 'Mum, are you alright?!' I am just sort of taking it in my stride. In the day I go for a bit of a walk and only do the things I can do. I try to go to bed each night and think of the lovely things that have happened in the day."





“I have had to come to terms with the fact that I am never going back to my street.”



“When I moved into aged care, the most difficult times were the fact that I did not know where I was. I couldn’t find my way around. It is a big adjustment. But then you meet somebody and make some good friends and they take you under their wing.”

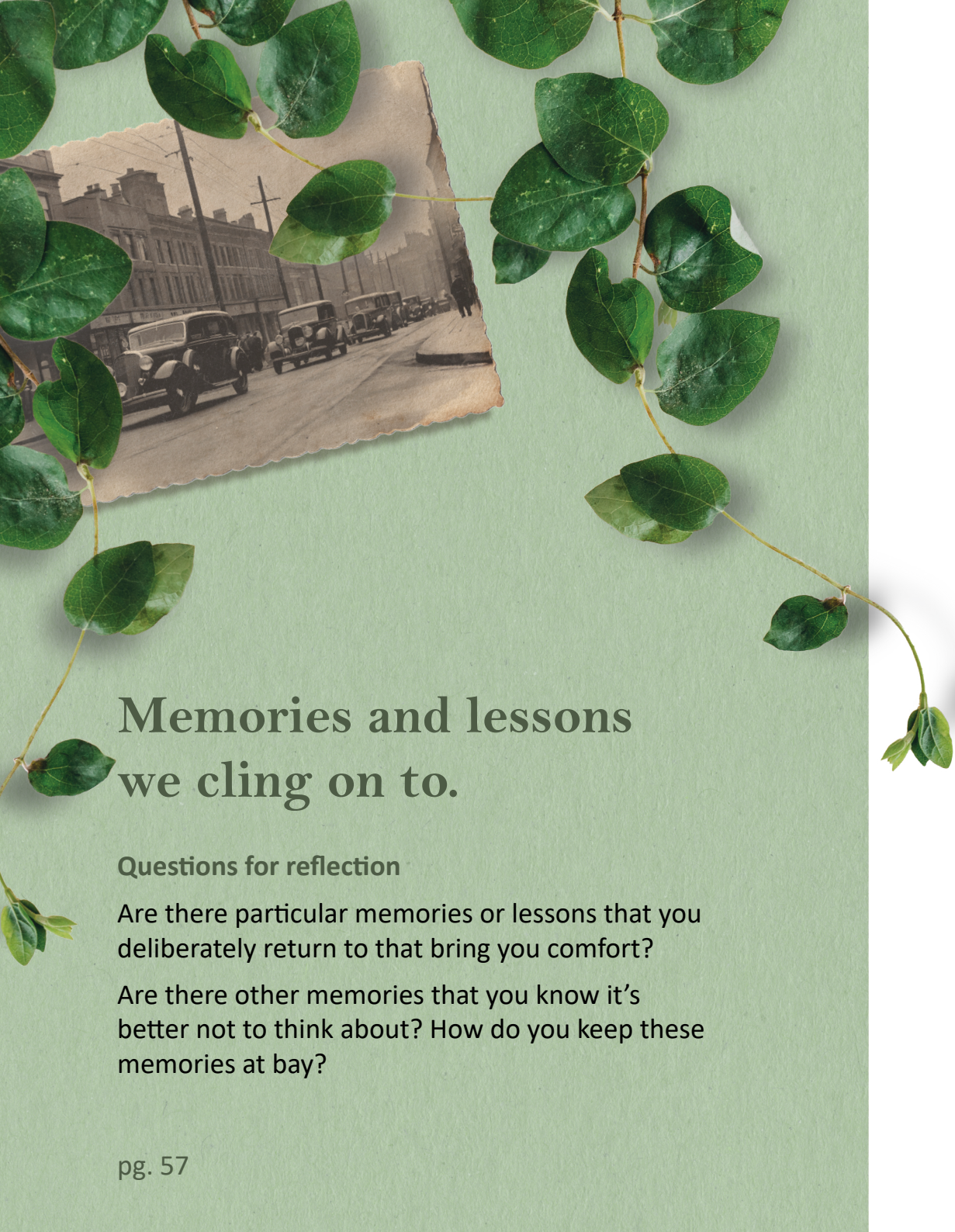


## Over time I started to feel more like myself.

“When I came into aged care, of course I didn’t want to come. But I kept forgetting my pills and I knew it was time. I thought I am going to be so lonely! I didn’t know anyone. I didn’t have anything to talk to others over dinner. Everyone was a stranger.

Because I had always worked in hotels all my life, I didn’t have the time to enjoy many other activities. But now, I am going to activities, going on walks and talking with others in a way that I have never done before. I started to feel more like myself.”





## Memories and lessons we cling on to.

### Questions for reflection

Are there particular memories or lessons that you deliberately return to that bring you comfort?

Are there other memories that you know it's better not to think about? How do you keep these memories at bay?

## We cling to the things that were taught to us.


Many of us hold on to the values and wisdom that has been passed down to us by family members. These values continue to guide us through times of loneliness.

One of us shared: "I think about the things my mother said to me that made an impression on me – I cling to that."

Another of us reflected:

"My mum and I used to cook together – we'd make coffee scrolls. She would say to me, 'You've got to go and deliver these to the neighbours, so they can have something special to eat'. As a kid I did not understand and thought 'why don't they just make their own?!' The family didn't have a lot but Mum always said, what we did have we should share. I talked about it with my mum, and this made me think about how important this was. Now living in aged care, I still try to look around for opportunities and still feel that if you've got extra, you share it."





## I don't want others to go through a similar experience of loneliness.

"Loneliness to me was when I was aged 20 or 21 and I moved with my husband to Victor Harbor from Melbourne. I had a baby boy, and we rented a place and bought a new Butcher's Shop. I would walk down the street pushing the pusher. I would help my husband in the shop. Some people would be friendly and say hello – but I didn't know a soul. My family used to call me and keep me up, but I would give my family hell and there were a lot of tears. I felt absolutely terrible. When I would get home, I would shut the door and bash it with my fist. My husband would say to me of a night time, 'Give it time. It will get better'.

So, I would just walk up and down Victoria Street and keep saying hello, keep talking and working in the shop. Then there was a Mothers and Babies group and I sat next to one mother who asked me, 'Are you new in town?' And I said, 'Yes, I am.' Her name was Janet, and after that I would meet up with her, have a cuppa and walk up to her place. My husband would say to her, 'Janet, you don't know what you've done!' Things did get better.

Now, living in aged care, I don't want others to go through this similar experience. There are different people that come in, and I want to encourage them.

One of my friends here at Eldercare said to me: 'I remember meeting you at lunch time on my very first day here. You were the one gregarious, do not judge people and look after us! It is like you are the Head Prefect!'"

## The particular loneliness in the loss of a baby.

"There is a particular loneliness in the loss and grief of losing a baby. I had a baby that died and nobody wanted to recognise what happened. It was too much. Sometimes it feels better not to remember. Then sometimes I feel like I have got to remember to fill the hole in myself."



## Messages from loved ones who have passed.

"Sometimes I get lonely at night, especially since my wife died. We were married for 70 years. After my wife died, I tried to notice the ways she still communicated with me. Over a period of two years, I would hear a fine wispy noise coming from the radio. The noise didn't have much of a tune, but was different than its usual marching tune, and so I put the radio on the kitchen table. I believe these noises were my wife communicating with me. She knew that I was facing a tough time and was trying to send messages to me. I have always said I am not a strong religious bloke. My father never liked going to church and so we got by without it. But messages from my loved ones have proved to me that your soul lives on after death. The soul still exists and is active. I hold on to this comfort and like to share it with others."

## The company of books.

### Questions for reflection

What books or stories have been company to you over your life?

What was it about these particular stories or the experience of reading that was significant for you? A character? Or a particular story line? The poetry or pictures? Or something else?



## The company of books.

"I grew up on a farm and there were seven of us kids. We lived in a shed that my dad built, and I can't remember having anyone there much as a kid. I felt less alone when I was reading. I would read the old war books and romance novels. I would read until midnight and imagine being a part of the story. Books were my company. I could not read as much in my later life, when MS (MS Multiple Sclerosis) started to play up with me. Now, I like both having time to myself and time with my friends. I always have some meals in my room and some in the dining room with others – it is important to get the balance right."

"I like to read books to help with the loneliness, all the usuals. I liked Enid Blyton growing up and my favourite character was Georgie."

"When I feel lonely, I try to get my mind on to a book or drift off to sleep."





## Other skills to live with loneliness.

### Questions for reflection

Are there particular skills of responding to loneliness that you have learned across your life that you carry with you?

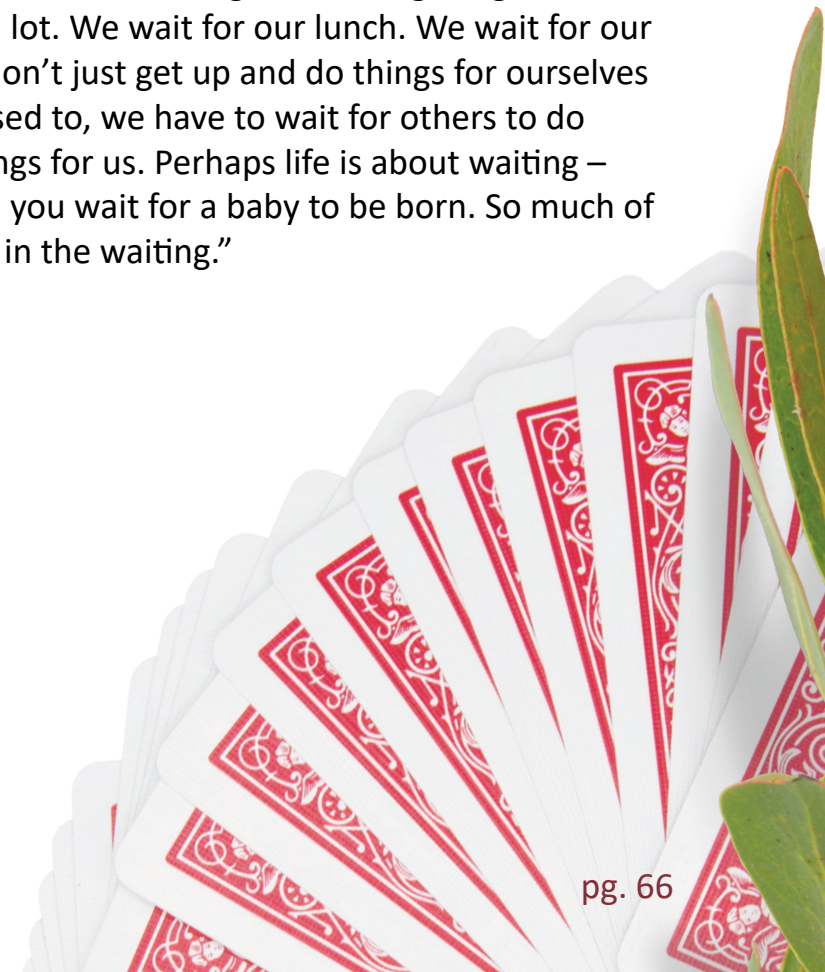
From whom or where did you learn these?

What message might you pass on to others, who are also struggling with loneliness, about how to respond to loneliness or live well with loneliness?

## Learning how to wait.

“The times I have felt most lonely was as a child when the war was on. When the air raids were happening, we had to turn off all the lights and learn how to wait. In the darkness, we tried to do something to pass the time, like playing cards. To this day, I take a pack of cards with me wherever I go!

We all wait for something. Now, living in aged care, we wait a lot. We wait for our lunch. We wait for our tea. We don't just get up and do things for ourselves like we used to, we have to wait for others to do these things for us. Perhaps life is about waiting – like when you wait for a baby to be born. So much of our life is in the waiting.”







## Patience, gardening and a sense of belonging.

“I used to be extremely active and managed a large garden on my property. Now that I am in a wheelchair, it is a different lifestyle. Sometimes I ring the buzzer about half an hour before an event to ensure a carer can come to wheel me there. Sometimes carers cannot come quickly. I try to just be calm and think about all the other people that they are involved in caring for. This brings some perspective of what is happening around you. I have had to learn the meaning of patience. This is extremely hard. I have learned the skill of patience throughout my life. I maintained my house and property by myself for 30 years. There could have been times of loneliness in this, but I tried to be an active person.

It is an adjustment to live in aged care now. I still enjoy the gardens here and watching the birds – the honeyeaters, magpies and pigeons. I brought a clivia plant from my garden in Littlehampton to the gardens here. It is a rare colour of pale yellow, and I am anxiously waiting to see if it will bloom. One of the carers suggested this idea to my family! It brings back memories of being in my garden and helps me feel a sense of belonging.”





## Connections to creativity.

### Questions for reflection

How has creativity been a part of your response to loneliness?

During times of loneliness, are there particular smells, sounds, songs, textures, tastes, dances, and so forth that are particularly important to you? If so, can you explain why these are especially important to you?

## Holding on to our creativity is important for many of us, often in small but significant ways:

- “I overcome my loneliness with craft – with my diamond dots. When I create with diamond dots, my mind goes afar, and I think about life memories. It gives me so much pleasure to create a picture and people come in my room and say how clever I am!”
- “Singing hymns to myself, that lifts me up.”
- “I write. I am a writer – it really is a wonderful thing.”
- “My artwork helps in times of loneliness – I lose myself into it. I am thinking more about what I am doing than anything else.”
- “My mother taught me how to knit and crochet, and I still do this during quiet times.”
- “I like music and good singing. I sing hymns to get me through difficult times.”







## Noticing things and being aware of others.

### Questions for reflection

Are there times when you have noticed and performed an act of care for another person?

What did it mean for the person who you cared for?  
What do you think it contributed to their life?

What did it mean for you to care for others or to receive care yourself?

## I notice when someone is sitting in the corner.

“In my work, I was in charge of different groups of staff and in doing that I needed to be aware of others. I needed to walk in and notice things. Now in aged care, I find if I walk around our home here, I see someone sitting in the corner looking as though they need someone. I sit and talk to them.”







## Contributing to others is important.

“I have had a long period of service to the community, in addition to my life as a qualified vet. I feel that contributing to others is important. I was in the Rotary Club for 72 years and it gave me an opportunity to give thought to the provision of additional services to other community members, and I enjoyed the opportunity to assist others.”

## Someone always needs our help.

“It was my decision to come into aged care and that made a difference. When I lost my car, my children needed to care a lot for me, and I couldn’t do the things I wanted for others.

Growing up in my family, there was always someone who needed help. I was brought up to help others, as number seven of nine children. My older siblings helped me and I helped them. I remember even as a 13 or 14-year-old, my mum put me on the bus for my auntie to pick me up, and then my auntie put me on a train to travel on and stay with my sister. I stayed there for some weeks to help her out with her nine-month-old baby.

Now living in aged care, I see the need all around me and can be of help to other people. I feel like I am doing what the Lord wants me to do.”





“We’re all here together  
and helping other people  
is important.”



“Sometimes my spirits are  
lifted with just a quick  
chat with another person.”



“When I lost my husband,  
I just thought I had to get  
on with life. I speak to  
other people and imagine  
that if I am feeling it, it  
might be the same for  
them too. I hold on to a  
positive mindset.”



## Reflections on being a part of the conversations about loneliness.

“It’s so modern that an organisation like this would talk to residents to ask them about their lives and experiences. It makes us feel really valuable. Keep up the good work!”



“I didn’t know what I was in for in coming to this conversation, but it was wonderful, open and friendly.”



“I loved learning about people’s lives!”

## Send a letter back!

**Was there a particular story, phrase or expression that caught your attention or moved you?**

These stories and reflections on living with loneliness are just some of the many skills and responses that Eldercare residents hold on to, to assist them in getting through or living with times of loneliness.

If you have your own stories, skills and knowledge of responding to times of loneliness that you would like to contribute to this document or share this with others who are also experiencing loneliness, please get in contact with the details below.

If you would like to send a message or letter back to the people who contributed their stories to this booklet, you can. Eldercare residents would love to hear from you! You can address it to ‘Dear Storyteller’ or something similar, please make contact using the details shown below.

**To make contact** please get in touch with an Eldercare Spiritual Care Practitioner at your local Eldercare site or you can email us on [spiritualcare@eldercare.net.au](mailto:spiritualcare@eldercare.net.au)





This booklet was developed from a series of group and individual conversations about loneliness with older people living in Eldercare residential aged care sites across metropolitan Adelaide. The Living with Loneliness initiative took place over six months in 2024 in collaboration with Eldercare's Spiritual Care team. Conversations were guided by questions and practices from Narrative Therapy & Community Work.

Published August 2025