

# Layperson-delivered phone intervention eases loneliness for at-risk adults

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(HealthDay)—A layperson-delivered telephone intervention can reduce

loneliness, depression, and anxiety among at-risk adults, according to a study published online Feb. 23 in *JAMA Psychiatry*.

Maninder K. Kahlon, Ph.D., from the University of Texas at Austin, and colleagues examined whether a layperson-delivered, empathy-focused program of telephone calls could improve [loneliness](#), depression, and anxiety in at-risk adults. A total of 240 adults were recruited from July 6 to Sept. 24, 2020, and were assigned to receive calls ([intervention group](#)) or no calls ([control group](#)). Validated scales were used to measure loneliness, depression, and anxiety at enrollment and after four weeks. The calls were made by 16 callers, aged 17 to 23 years, who were briefly trained in empathetic conversational techniques.

Of the 240 participants, 13 and one in the intervention and control arms, respectively, were lost to follow-up. The researchers found that after four weeks, postassessment differences between the intervention and control groups showed an improvement of 1.1 on the University of California Loneliness Scale and improvement of 0.32 on De Jong for loneliness; there were also improvements of 1.5 on the Personal Health Questionnaire for Depression and 1.8 on the Generalized Anxiety Disorder scale. No change was seen on general physical health on the Short Form Health Questionnaire Survey, while [mental health](#) improved by 2.6.

"A four-week, telephone-based, empathy-focused program delivered during the summer of 2020 reduced loneliness, [depression](#), and anxiety in homebound, largely single, adults," the authors write.

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**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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