

AT EVERY SCHOOL AND IN EVERY COMMUNITY...

there are young people who suffer silently because they feel left out, alone or invisible.



Social isolation is an individual's perceived or real separation from a group of peers. It is a feeling that you don't fit in, that you don't belong, or that you have been left out. The separation may be the result of a rejection from others, or from the person's own withdrawal from others. Social isolation can happen in person or online.

Social isolation can become a serious issue. Young people who experience social isolation can become a victim of bullying, violence and/or depression.

As a result, many pull further away from society, struggle with learning and social development and/or may choose to hurt themselves or others.

There is a difference between social isolation and healthy alone time. Not all alone time is bad. Healthy alone time is when you choose to be alone to clear your mind, take a break from "socializing," give time to focus on and recharge yourself, and/or work through problems or possibilities without any outside influence. Some people are introverted, and need more healthy alone time than others.

ABOUT SANDY HOOK PROMISE

(SHP) envisions a future where all children are free from school shootings and other acts of violence. As a national nonprofit organization, SHP's mission is to educate and empower youth and adults to prevent violence in schools, homes, and communities. Creators of the life-saving, evidence-informed "Know the Signs" prevention programs, SHP teaches the warning signs of someone who may be in crisis, socially isolated, or at-risk of hurting themselves or others and how to get help. SHP also advances school safety, youth mental health, and responsible gun ownership at the state and federal levels through nonpartisan policy and partnerships. SHP is led by several family members whose loved ones were killed in the tragic mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

About Sandy Hook Promise and our other school and community-based prevention programs and training, please visit: sandyhookpromise.org

Make the Promise and together we can protect children.



Sandy Hook
PROMISE

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START with
Hello

**PARENT
GUIDE**

FOR PARENTS OF STUDENTS
IN GRADES K-12



WHAT IS...

START with
Hello

START WITH HELLO

is a prevention program that teaches children and teens how to be more socially inclusive and connected to each other. *Start With Hello* asks students, educators, parents and other community leaders who interact with children to take steps in class, the lunchroom and/or other times in their day to be inclusive and connected.

YOU CAN START WITH HELLO IN 3 SIMPLE STEPS:



WE NEED YOU! HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP...

FOR ALL AGES

- **Make Start With Hello part of your family culture.** Make an intentional effort to greet each other with hello and ask questions about each other's day.
- **Practice active listening.** During car rides or at dinner challenge each other to use eye contact and truly listen.
- **Model best practices for your child.** Say hello to strangers on the street and make conversations at stores or restaurants.
- **Share your story.** Tell your child a story about a time that you reached out to someone who was alone and in need. What happened? How did you feel afterwards?
- **Be there for your child.** Talk about what your child can do if they ever feel lonely at school. Remind your child that you are always there for them if they need someone to talk to.
- **Talk about good and bad kinds of being alone.** When does being alone feel good? When does being alone feel bad?

Fostering inclusion and community is an important life skill and with practice, simple to do every day. There is no age limit to reaching out to and helping others!

Your school or community organization may already be taking part in Sandy Hook Promise's *Start With Hello* activities. If they aren't, why not bring *Start With Hello* to them? All materials and training are provided at no cost and are extremely easy to implement. Also – kids love it! We believe *Start With Hello* will be both meaningful and fun for your child. But it can also be fun for you! We hope you can use the ideas in the brief guide to continue the conversation at home and beyond into your community.

FOR GRADES 2-5

- **Act it out!** Pretend to be an isolated student at your child's school and have your child practice reaching out and saying hello. Act out different scenarios, then switch roles and try it again.
- **Create a poster.** Draw or paint a poster with your child to remind your family to "Start With Hello" and hang it up in your house.
- **Learn how to say hello in different languages.** Challenge your child to try a different language each time they say hello!

French – Bonjour	Spanish – Hola
Italian – Buon Giorno	German – Guten Tag
- **Make it a game!** Create a family wide contest to see who can say hello to the most people each day. Keep track of each person's "hello count" and celebrate the winner at the end of the week.

FOR GRADES 6-12

- **Share strategies for starting conversations.** Create your own conversation starters or try using the following: How is your day going? What did you do over the weekend?
- **Discuss cyber bullying.** Talk about what respect and social inclusion looks like on social media and discuss what to do if they witness cyber bullying.