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**Level 3 – 25th February, 2021**

## **Japan government creates a minister of loneliness**

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<https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

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**Please try Levels 0, 1 and 2 (they are easier).**

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# THE ARTICLE

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

The Japanese government now has a "minister of loneliness". It is the first time Japan has had such a minister. Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga created the role in early February. He asked Tetsushi Sakamoto to fill the new position. Mr Suga wanted to do something about the rise in suicide cases. The number of people taking their own lives has risen during the pandemic. Japan's National Police Agency showed that 20,919 people died by suicide in 2020. This is 750 more than the previous year. It is also the first consecutive rise in suicides in 11 years. Mr Sakamoto told reporters: "I hope to promote activities that prevent loneliness and social isolation and to improve the ties between people."

The police agency reported that there has been a much bigger rise in suicides among women and young people. Prime Minister Suga said women have been struggling with loneliness since the coronavirus pandemic started in early 2020. He told reporters: "Women are suffering from isolation more than men are, and the number of suicides is on a rising trend." There has been a 70 per cent year-on-year increase in the number of women taking their own lives. Yoko Suzuki, a 23-year-old designer who lives in Tokyo, said she has suffered from loneliness since coronavirus started. She said: "Not seeing people smile behind their mask makes me sad and lonely." She added: "I want to see happy faces."

Sources: <https://thehill.com/policy/international/asia-pacific/539917-japanese-prime-minister-appoints-minister-of-loneliness-to>  
<https://nypost.com/2021/02/22/japan-creates-minister-of-loneliness-to-fight-covid-suicides/>  
<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/02/12/national/loneliness-isolation-minister/>

# WARM-UPS

**1. LONELINESS:** Students walk around the class and talk to other students about loneliness. Change partners often and share your findings.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, talk about these topics or words from the article. What will the article say about them? What can you say about these words and your life?

minister / loneliness / role / position / rise / suicide / pandemic / reporters / isolation / police / young people / coronavirus / suffering / trend / designer / mask / happy faces

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

**3. MINISTER:** Students A **strongly** believe all governments need a minister of loneliness; Students B **strongly** believe otherwise. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

**4. ADVICE:** What advice would you give these people who are lonely? Complete this table with your partner(s). Change partners often and share what you wrote.

	Why they might be lonely	Advice
A schoolchild		
A woman		
A man		
A business person		
A rock star		
An old person		

**5. MASK:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "mask". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

**6. HELP:** Rank these with your partner. Put the people who can best help others with loneliness at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- family
- doctors
- neighbours
- local community
- friends
- co-workers
- social media
- yourself

# VOCABULARY MATCHING

## Paragraph 1

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| 1. minister    | a. Gone up.  |
| 2. role        | b. The boss (head) of a government department.               |
| 3. suicide     | c. The action of killing oneself on purpose.                 |
| 4. risen       | d. One after another without the order being broken.         |
| 5. previous    | e. Stop from happening.                                      |
| 6. consecutive | f. A job or position in a company, movie, play or situation. |
| 7. prevent     | g. Existing or occurring before in time or order.            |

## Paragraph 2

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 8. agency     | h. A general direction in which something is developing or changing.       |
| 9. struggling | i. A cover for all or part of the face.                                    |
| 10. suffering | j. The fact of being alone or very far away from others.                   |
| 11. trend     | k. The state of undergoing pain, distress, or hardship.                    |
| 12. pandemic  | l. A disease that is over a whole country or the world.                    |
| 13. isolation | m. A business or organization established to provide a particular service. |
| 14. mask      | n. Having a lot of trouble doing something.                                |

# BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- a. Japan appointed a minister of loneliness in late January. **T / F**
- b. The number of deaths by suicide rose in Japan in the pandemic. **T / F**
- c. Over 20,000 people took their own lives in Japan in 2020. **T / F**
- d. The loneliness minister wants to improve ties between people. **T / F**
- e. Japan's police said there was a bigger rise in suicides among men. **T / F**
- f. Japan's leader said women are feeling lonelier than men. **T / F**
- g. There has been a 17 per cent increase in suicides among women. **T / F**
- h. A young woman in Tokyo does not like seeing masks on people. **T / F**

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** (The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                       |               |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| 1. <b>role</b>        | a. announced  |
| 2. <b>rise</b>        | b. push       |
| 3. <b>consecutive</b> | c. unhappy    |
| 4. <b>promote</b>     | d. successive |
| 5. <b>ties</b>        | e. position   |
| 6. <b>reported</b>    | f. shift      |
| 7. <b>struggling</b>  | g. began      |
| 8. <b>trend</b>       | h. links      |
| 9. <b>started</b>     | i. fighting   |
| 10. <b>sad</b>        | j. increase   |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- |                                      |                        |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. the first time Japan has          | a. prevent loneliness  |
| 2. This is 750 more than             | b. their own lives     |
| 3. the first consecutive             | c. behind their mask   |
| 4. I hope to promote activities that | d. the previous year   |
| 5. improve the ties between          | e. with loneliness     |
| 6. a much bigger rise in suicides    | f. faces               |
| 7. women have been struggling        | g. people              |
| 8. the number of women taking        | h. rise                |
| 9. Not seeing people smile           | i. among women         |
| 10. I want to see happy              | j. had such a minister |

# GAP FILL

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

The Japanese government now has a "minister of loneliness". It is the first (1) \_\_\_\_\_ Japan has had such a minister. Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga created the (2) \_\_\_\_\_ in early February. He asked Tetsushi Sakamoto to fill the new position. Mr Suga wanted to do something about the (3) \_\_\_\_\_ in suicide cases. The number of people taking their own lives has risen (4) \_\_\_\_\_ the pandemic. Japan's National Police Agency (5) \_\_\_\_\_ that 20,919 people died by suicide in 2020. This is 750 more than the (6) \_\_\_\_\_ year. It is also the first consecutive rise in suicides in 11 years. Mr Sakamoto told reporters: "I hope to promote (7) \_\_\_\_\_ that prevent loneliness and social isolation and to improve the (8) \_\_\_\_\_ between people."

*during*  
*previous*  
*time*  
*ties*  
*showed*  
*rise*  
*activities*  
*role*

The police (9) \_\_\_\_\_ reported that there has been a much bigger rise in suicides (10) \_\_\_\_\_ women and young people. Prime Minister Suga said women have been (11) \_\_\_\_\_ with loneliness since the coronavirus pandemic started in early 2020. He told reporters: "Women are (12) \_\_\_\_\_ from isolation more than men are, and the number of suicides is on a rising (13) \_\_\_\_\_." There has been a 70 per cent year-on-year increase in the number of women taking their own (14) \_\_\_\_\_. Yoko Suzuki, a 23-year-old designer who lives in Tokyo, said she has suffered from (15) \_\_\_\_\_ since coronavirus started. She said: "Not seeing people (16) \_\_\_\_\_ behind their mask makes me sad and lonely." She added: "I want to see happy faces."

*suffering*  
*loneliness*  
*struggling*  
*smile*  
*agency*  
*trend*  
*among*  
*lives*

# LISTENING – Guess the answers. Listen to check.

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

- 1) It is the first time Japan has had \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. such the minister
  - b. such are minister
  - c. such a minister
  - d. such as minister
- 2) Mr Suga wanted to do something about the rise \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. on suicide cases
  - b. at suicide cases
  - c. in suicide cases
  - d. to suicide cases
- 3) This is 750 more than \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. the previous year
  - b. the previously year
  - c. the previews year
  - d. the pre-viewers year
- 4) It is also the first consecutive \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. raising suicides
  - b. arisen suicides
  - c. rise in suicides
  - d. rose suicides
- 5) activities that prevent loneliness and social isolation and to \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. improve the tiles
  - b. improve the tyres
  - c. improve the types
  - d. improve the ties
- 6) The police agency reported that there has been a much bigger rise in \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. suicides among woman
  - b. suicides young women
  - c. suicides young woman
  - d. suicides among women
- 7) Prime Minister Suga said women have been struggling \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. without loneliness
  - b. wither loneliness
  - c. with loneliness
  - d. within loneliness
- 8) He told reporters: "Women are suffering from isolation more \_\_\_\_\_."
  - a. than men are
  - b. than men be
  - c. than men do
  - d. than men have
- 9) a 70 per cent year-on-year increase in the number of women taking \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. their roam lives
  - b. their ruin lives
  - c. their own lives
  - d. their rune lives
- 10) Not seeing people smile \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. behind them mask
  - b. behind they mask
  - c. behind their mask
  - d. behind there mask

# LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

The Japanese government now has a "minister of loneliness". It is the first time Japan has had (1) \_\_\_\_\_. Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga (2) \_\_\_\_\_ in early February. He asked Tetsushi Sakamoto to fill the new position. Mr Suga wanted to do something about the rise in suicide cases. The number of people taking (3) \_\_\_\_\_ has risen during the pandemic. Japan's National Police Agency showed that 20,919 people (4) \_\_\_\_\_ in 2020. This is 750 more than the previous year. It is also the first consecutive rise in suicides in 11 years. Mr Sakamoto told reporters: "I hope to promote activities that prevent loneliness (5) \_\_\_\_\_ and to (6) \_\_\_\_\_ between people."

The police agency reported that there has been a (7) \_\_\_\_\_ in suicides among women and young people. Prime Minister Suga said women have (8) \_\_\_\_\_ loneliness since the coronavirus pandemic started in early 2020. He told reporters: "Women are suffering (9) \_\_\_\_\_ than men are, and the number of suicides is on a rising trend." There has been a 70 per cent (10) \_\_\_\_\_ increase in the number of women taking their own lives. Yoko Suzuki, a 23-year-old (11) \_\_\_\_\_ in Tokyo, said she has suffered from loneliness since coronavirus started. She said: "Not seeing people smile behind their mask makes me (12) \_\_\_\_\_." She added: "I want to see happy faces."



# COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

1. How many ministers of loneliness has Japan had before this one?
2. When did Japan's leader create this post?
3. What has caused an increase in the number of suicides?
4. Which organisation reported a rise in the number of suicides?
5. What does the loneliness minister want to improve between people?
6. In which group of people has there been a rise in suicides besides women?
7. What did Mr Suga say women are struggling with?
8. By how much has the number of suicides among women risen?
9. What is Yoko Suzuki's job?
10. What does Yoko Suzuki want to see?

# MULTIPLE CHOICE - QUIZ

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

- 1) How many ministers of loneliness has Japan had before this one?
  - a) 3
  - b) 1
  - c) 0
  - d) 2
- 2) When did Japan's leader create this post?
  - a) February 2021
  - b) February 2020
  - c) January 2021
  - d) December 2021
- 3) What has caused an increase in the number of suicides?
  - a) money worries
  - b) the weather
  - c) unemployment
  - d) the pandemic
- 4) Which organisation reported a rise in the number of suicides?
  - a) the WHO
  - b) National Police Agency
  - c) National Health Service
  - d) Interior Ministry
- 5) What does the loneliness minister want to improve between people?
  - a) mood
  - b) income
  - c) ties
  - d) social circles
- 6) In which group of people has there been a rise in suicides besides women?
  - a) men in the thirties
  - b) young people
  - c) working men
  - d) the retired
- 7) What did Mr Suga say women are struggling with?
  - a) finances
  - b) hectic lives
  - c) employment
  - d) loneliness
- 8) By how much has the number of suicides among women risen?
  - a) 60%
  - b) 70%
  - c) 50%
  - d) 80%
- 9) What is Yoko Suzuki's job?
  - a) graphic designer
  - b) accountant
  - c) doctor
  - d) pilot
- 10) What does Yoko Suzuki want to see?
  - a) summer
  - b) a doctor
  - c) vaccines
  - d) happy faces

# ROLE PLAY

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

## **Role A – Doctors**

You think doctors are the best people to help with loneliness. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their forms of help. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): neighbours, social media or you.

## **Role B – Neighbours**

You think neighbours are the best people to help with loneliness. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their forms of help. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): doctors, social media or you.

## **Role C – Social Media**

You think social media is the best way to help with loneliness. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their forms of help. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): neighbours, doctors or you.

## **Role D – Yourself**

You think you are the best people to help with loneliness. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their forms of help. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): neighbours, social media or doctors.

# AFTER READING / LISTENING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'lonely' and 'minister'.

<b>lonely</b>	<b>minister</b>
---------------	-----------------

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• first</li><li>• role</li><li>• position</li><li>• pandemic</li><li>• previous</li><li>• ties</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• bigger</li><li>• struggling</li><li>• isolation</li><li>• 70</li><li>• 23</li><li>• mask</li></ul>
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# LONELINESS SURVEY

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

Write five GOOD questions about loneliness in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper. When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

# LONELINESS DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

1. What did you think when you read the headline?
2. What images are in your mind when you hear the word 'lonely'?
3. What do you know about loneliness?
4. What health problems can loneliness cause?
5. What do you think of the idea of a minister of loneliness?
6. How has the pandemic affected your mental health?
7. What can governments do to cut numbers of suicides?
8. How good are you at helping people who are lonely?
9. What advice do you have for lonely people?
10. What can the minister do to help with social isolation?

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# LONELINESS DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

11. Did you like reading this article? Why/not?
12. What do you think of when you hear the word 'mask'?
13. What do you think about what you read?
14. When have you been lonely?
15. Why might the pandemic be affecting women more than men?
16. How would you deal with isolation?
17. Are you happy being by yourself for a long time?
18. What do you think of everyone wearing masks?
19. How important is it to see happy faces?
20. What questions would you like to ask the minister of loneliness?

## **DISCUSSION (Write your own questions)**

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

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## **DISCUSSION (Write your own questions)**

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

# LANGUAGE - CLOZE

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

The Japanese government now has a "minister of loneliness". It is the first time Japan has had (1) \_\_\_\_\_ a minister. Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga created the (2) \_\_\_\_\_ in early February. He asked Tetsushi Sakamoto to (3) \_\_\_\_\_ the new position. Mr Suga wanted to do something about the rise in suicide cases. The number of people taking their (4) \_\_\_\_\_ lives has risen during the pandemic. Japan's National Police Agency showed that 20,919 people died by suicide in 2020. This is 750 more than the previous year. It is also the first consecutive rise (5) \_\_\_\_\_ suicides in 11 years. Mr Sakamoto told reporters: "I hope to promote activities that prevent loneliness and social isolation and to improve the (6) \_\_\_\_\_ between people."

The police agency reported that there has been a (7) \_\_\_\_\_ bigger rise in suicides among women and young people. Prime Minister Suga said women have been (8) \_\_\_\_\_ with loneliness since the coronavirus pandemic started in early 2020. He told reporters: "Women are suffering from isolation more than men are, and the number of suicides (9) \_\_\_\_\_ on a rising trend." There has been a 70 per cent year-on-year increase in the number of women (10) \_\_\_\_\_ their own lives. Yoko Suzuki, a 23-year-old designer who lives in Tokyo, said she has suffered (11) \_\_\_\_\_ loneliness since coronavirus started. She said: "Not (12) \_\_\_\_\_ people smile behind their mask makes me sad and lonely." She added: "I want to see happy faces."

## Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- |     |                |               |               |              |
|-----|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1.  | (a) much       | (b) so        | (c) many      | (d) such     |
| 2.  | (a) real       | (b) LOL       | (c) roll      | (d) role     |
| 3.  | (a) full       | (b) fill      | (c) filling   | (d) fills    |
| 4.  | (a) town       | (b) down      | (c) own       | (d) gown     |
| 5.  | (a) in         | (b) on        | (c) at        | (d) to       |
| 6.  | (a) ties       | (b) scarves   | (c) pins      | (d) fastens  |
| 7.  | (a) many       | (b) more      | (c) most      | (d) much     |
| 8.  | (a) struggling | (b) smuggling | (c) stragglng | (d) stacking |
| 9.  | (a) do         | (b) is        | (c) be        | (d) are      |
| 10. | (a) taken      | (b) took      | (c) taking    | (d) takes    |
| 11. | (a) at         | (b) on        | (c) from      | (d) as       |
| 12. | (a) seen       | (b) seeing    | (c) sees      | (d) see      |



# SPELLING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

## Paragraph 1

1. fill the new tioionps
2. risen during the dpicnaem
3. 750 more than the verspoiu year
4. I hope to rpotome activities
5. prevent loneliness and social oanlostii
6. mivpreo the ties between people

## Paragraph 2

7. police anegcy
8. women have been snggliutg
9. Women are suffering from otlisoian
10. on a rising tnrde
11. a 23-year-old isdenegr
12. she has edfuersf from loneliness

# PUT THE TEXT BACK TOGETHER

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

**Number these lines in the correct order.**

- ( ) February. He asked Tetsushi Sakamoto to fill the new position. Mr Suga wanted to do something
- ( ) are, and the number of suicides is on a rising trend." There has been a 70 per cent year-on-year
- ( ) and young people. Prime Minister Suga said women have been struggling with loneliness since the coronavirus
- ( ) about the rise in suicide cases. The number of people taking their own lives has risen during the
- ( ) minister. Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga created the role in early
- ( ) reporters: "I hope to promote activities that prevent loneliness and social isolation and to improve the ties between people."
- ( ) increase in the number of women taking their own lives. Yoko Suzuki, a 23-year-old
- ( ) The police agency reported that there has been a much bigger rise in suicides among women
- ( ) smile behind their mask makes me sad and lonely." She added: "I want to see happy faces."
- ( ) year. It is also the first consecutive rise in suicides in 11 years. Mr Sakamoto told
- ( **1** ) The Japanese government now has a "minister of loneliness". It is the first time Japan has had such a
- ( ) designer who lives in Tokyo, said she has suffered from loneliness since coronavirus started. She said: "Not seeing people
- ( ) pandemic. Japan's National Police Agency showed that 20,919 people died by suicide in 2020. This is 750 more than the previous
- ( ) pandemic started in early 2020. He told reporters: "Women are suffering from isolation more than men

# PUT THE WORDS IN THE RIGHT ORDER

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

1. has a time The first minister . Japan such
2. rise cases . the something Do in about suicide
3. own people number taking lives . of their The
4. more than This 750 previous the is year .
5. to promote loneliness . hope activities I prevent that
6. bigger rise suicides . been has There in a
7. have women Suga loneliness . been struggling said with
8. isolation suffering are more Women men . from than
9. coronavirus from loneliness She suffered has started . since
10. their people seeing smile Not mask . behind

# CIRCLE THE CORRECT WORD (20 PAIRS)

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

The Japanese government *now / know* has a "minister of loneliness". It is the first time Japan has had *so / such* a minister. Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga created the *roll / role* in early February. He asked Tetsushi Sakamoto to fill the *new / news* position. Mr Suga wanted to do something about the *rise / arise* in suicide cases. The number of people taking their own lives has *rising / risen* during the pandemic. Japan's National Police Agency showed that 20,919 people died *on / by* suicide in 2020. This is 750 more than the *previous / previously* year. It is also the first consecutive rise *in / on* suicides in 11 years. Mr Sakamoto told reporters: "I hope to promote activities that prevent loneliness and social isolation and to improve the *tries / ties* between people."

The police agency *report / reported* that there has been a much bigger rise in suicides *among / between* women and young people. Prime Minister Suga said women have been *struggled / struggling* with loneliness since the coronavirus pandemic started in early 2020. He *tell / told* reporters: "Women are suffering from isolation more than men *be / are*, and the number of suicides is on a rising *trend / trendy*." There has been a 70 per cent year-on-year increase in the number of women taking their own *living / lives*. Yoko Suzuki, a 23-year-old *designing / designer* who lives in Tokyo, said she has suffered from loneliness *for / since* coronavirus started. She said: "Not seeing people smile behind their mask makes me sad and lonely." She added: "I want to see *happily / happy* faces."

**Talk about the connection between each pair of words in italics, and why the correct word is correct.**

# INSERT THE VOWELS (a, e, i, o, u)

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

Th\_ J\_p\_n\_s\_ g\_v\_rnm\_nt n\_w h\_s \_ "m\_n\_st\_r \_f l\_n\_l\_n\_ss". \_t \_s th\_ f\_rst t\_m\_ J\_p\_n h\_s h\_d s\_ch \_ m\_n\_st\_r. J\_p\_n's Pr\_m\_ M\_n\_st\_r Y\_sh\_h\_d\_ S\_g\_ cr\_\_t\_d th\_ r\_l\_ \_n \_\_rly F\_br\_\_ry. H\_ \_sk\_d T\_ts\_sh\_ S\_k\_m\_t\_ t\_ f\_ll th\_ n\_w p\_s\_t\_\_n. Mr S\_g\_ w\_nt\_d t\_ d\_ s\_m\_thng \_b\_\_t th\_ r\_s\_ \_n s\_\_c\_d\_ c\_s\_s. Th\_ n\_mb\_r \_f p\_\_pl\_ t\_k\_ng th\_\_r \_wn l\_v\_s h\_s r\_s\_n d\_rng th\_ p\_nd\_m\_c. J\_p\_n's N\_t\_\_n\_l P\_l\_c\_ \_g\_ncy sh\_w\_d th\_t 20,919 p\_\_pl\_ d\_\_d by s\_\_c\_d\_ \_n 2020. Th\_s \_s 750 m\_r\_ th\_n th\_ pr\_v\_\_s y\_\_r. \_t \_s \_ls\_ th\_ f\_rst c\_ns\_c\_t\_v\_ r\_s\_ \_n s\_\_c\_d\_s \_n 11 y\_\_rs. Mr S\_k\_m\_t\_ t\_ld r\_p\_r\_t\_rs: "\_ h\_p\_ t\_ pr\_m\_t\_ \_ct\_v\_t\_\_s th\_t pr\_v\_nt l\_n\_l\_n\_ss \_nd s\_c\_\_l\_s\_l\_t\_\_n \_nd t\_ \_mpr\_v\_ th\_ t\_\_s b\_tw\_\_n p\_\_pl\_."

Th\_ p\_l\_c\_ \_g\_ncy r\_p\_r\_t\_d th\_t th\_r\_ h\_s b\_\_n \_ m\_ch b\_gg\_r r\_s\_ \_n s\_\_c\_d\_s \_m\_ng w\_m\_n \_nd y\_\_ng p\_\_pl\_. Pr\_m\_ M\_n\_st\_r S\_g\_ s\_\_d w\_m\_n h\_v\_ b\_\_n str\_ggl\_ng w\_th l\_n\_l\_n\_ss s\_nc\_ th\_ c\_r\_n\_v\_r\_s p\_nd\_m\_c st\_r\_t\_d \_n \_\_rly 2020. H\_ t\_ld r\_p\_r\_t\_rs: "W\_m\_n \_r\_ s\_ff\_rng fr\_m \_s\_l\_t\_\_n m\_r\_ th\_n m\_n \_r\_, \_nd th\_ n\_mb\_r \_f s\_\_c\_d\_s \_s \_n \_ r\_sng tr\_nd." Th\_r\_ h\_s b\_\_n \_ 70 p\_r c\_nt y\_\_r-n-y\_\_r \_ncr\_\_s\_ \_n th\_ n\_mb\_r \_f w\_m\_n t\_k\_ng th\_\_r \_wn l\_v\_s. Y\_k\_ S\_z\_k\_, \_ 23-y\_\_r-ld d\_s\_gn\_r wh\_ l\_v\_s \_n T\_ky\_, s\_\_d sh\_ h\_s s\_ff\_r\_d fr\_m l\_n\_l\_n\_ss s\_nc\_ c\_r\_n\_v\_r\_s st\_r\_t\_d. Sh\_ s\_\_d: "N\_t s\_\_ng p\_\_pl\_ sm\_l\_ b\_h\_nd th\_\_r m\_sk m\_k\_s m\_ s\_d \_nd l\_n\_ly." Sh\_ \_dd\_d: "\_ w\_nt t\_ s\_\_ h\_ppy f\_c\_s."

# PUNCTUATE THE TEXT AND ADD CAPITALS

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

the japanese government now has a minister of loneliness it is the first time japan has had such a minister japans prime minister yoshihide suga created the role in early february he asked tetsushi sakamoto to fill the new position mr suga wanted to do something about the rise in suicide cases the number of people taking their own lives has risen during the pandemic japans national police agency showed that 20919 people died by suicide in 2020 this is 750 more than the previous year it is also the first consecutive rise in suicides in 11 years mr sakamoto told reporters i hope to promote activities that prevent loneliness and social isolation and to improve the ties between people

the police agency reported that there has been a much bigger rise in suicides among women and young people prime minister suga said women have been struggling with loneliness since the coronavirus pandemic started in early 2020 he told reporters women are suffering from isolation more than men are and the number of suicides is on a rising trend there has been a 70 per cent year on year increase in the number of women taking their own lives yoko suzuki a 23 year old designer who lives in tokyo said she has suffered from loneliness since coronavirus started she said not seeing people smile behind their mask makes me sad and lonely she added i want to see happy faces

# PUT A SLASH ( / ) WHERE THE SPACES ARE

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210225-minister-of-loneliness.html>

The Japanese government now has a "minister of loneliness". It is the first time Japan has had such a minister. Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga created the role in early February. He asked Tetsushi Sakamoto to fill the new position. Mr Suga wanted to do something about the rise in suicide cases. The number of people taking their own lives has risen during the pandemic. Japan's National Police Agency showed that 20,919 people died by suicide in 2020. This is 750 more than the previous year. It is also the first consecutive rise in suicides in 11 years. Mr Sakamoto told reporters: "I hope to promote activities that prevent loneliness and social isolation and to improve ties between people." The police agency reported that there has been a much bigger rise in suicides among women and young people. Prime Minister Suga said women have been struggling with loneliness since the coronavirus pandemic started in early 2020. He told reporters: "Women are suffering from isolation more than men are, and the number of suicides is on a rising trend." There has been a 70 percent year-on-year increase in the number of women taking their own lives. Yoko Suzuki, a 23-year-old designer who lives in Tokyo, said she has suffered from loneliness since coronavirus started. She said: "Not seeing people smile behind their mask makes me sad and lonely." She added: "I want to see happy faces."







# HOMEWORK

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find out more about this news story. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

**3. LONELINESS:** Make a poster about loneliness. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

**4. TIES:** Write a magazine article about governments doing more to promote ties between people. Include imaginary interviews with people who are for and against this.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

**5. WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?** Write a newspaper article about the next stage in this news story. Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Give each other feedback on your articles.

**6. LETTER:** Write a letter to an expert on loneliness. Ask him/her three questions about it. Give him/her three of your ideas about how to stop people being lonely. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

# ANSWERS

## VOCABULARY (p.4)

1. b    2. f    3. c    4. a    5. g    6. d    7. e  
8. m    9. n    10. k    11. h    12. l    13. j    14. i

## TRUE / FALSE (p.5)

- a F    b T    c T    d T    e F    f T    g F    h T

## SYNONYM MATCH (p.5)

1. e	2. j	3. d	4. b	5. h
6. a	7. i	8. f	9. g	10. c

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS (p.9)

- None
- Early February
- The pandemic
- Japan's National Police Agency
- Ties
- Young people
- Loneliness
- 70%
- Graphic designer
- Happy faces

## WORDS IN THE RIGHT ORDER (p.20)

- The first time Japan has such a minister.
- Do something about the rise in suicide cases.
- The number of people taking their own lives.
- This is 750 more than the previous year.
- I hope to promote activities that prevent loneliness.
- There has been a bigger rise in suicides.
- Suga said women have been struggling with loneliness.
- Women are suffering from isolation more than men.
- She has suffered from loneliness since coronavirus started.
- Not seeing people smile behind their mask.

## MULTIPLE CHOICE - QUIZ (p.10)

1. c    2. a    3. d    4. b    5. c    6. d    7. b    8. d    9. a    10. d

## ALL OTHER EXERCISES

Please check for yourself by looking at the Article on page 2.  
(It's good for your English ;-)