

# Disengaged Niamh

Niamh is 13 and lives in Louth with her mum, dad and older sister. **She really likes the area she lives in and the great outdoors**, particularly the peace and quiet and the lush green surroundings, where she enjoys taking walks. There's also a beach not too far away which she loves but rarely gets to visit.



Niamh has **a small group of close friends that she loves spending time with**. They mostly see each other at school but when they can, they love hanging out at each other's houses, going on their phones and chatting about what's new and popular. **Sometimes they go for walks or a bike ride together, or pop into town if they're allowed**. Other than this, there's very little for Niamh and her friends to do, or places to go, and **she gets really bored of doing the same old things all the time**. **Niamh doesn't know of any other activities for girls in her area and rarely sees anything advertised**. **She feels quite restricted and everything has to be planned around her parents (or her friends' parents) providing lifts to things**.

Niamh's mum and dad encourage her and her sister to work hard and focus on schoolwork, **so she can't spend as much time with her friends as she would really like**.

She isn't allowed to go as far from home or do things that her slightly older sister can and **Niamh longs for more freedom and to make her own choices**. Being at home most of the time, Niamh spends her time chatting with friends on social media, playing online games, watching Netflix with the family and doing lots of homework.

Niamh has never really been into sport or exercise and never felt like she could keep up with the sporty girls. **Sport is quite serious and competitive, both at school and in her community**. It's all about getting into the team and she never does, **so she doesn't feel confident or good enough to take part in sport**. She has been teased for doing things wrong and **feels very self-conscious and that she doesn't belong in the popular, sporty 'in-crowd'**. There's a GAA pitch nearby in her town but Niamh has not once wanted to try it, as she thinks it's just for very committed and

talented sporty girls who have been playing for years.

Taking part in sport or exercise isn't a big priority for Niamh. She would like to be more active as she really enjoys her walks and occasional bike rides with friends. **She knows it is good for her and wants activities where she can just let off steam, forget about schoolwork and have fun with her friends**. She once tried a fitness class in town with two of her close friends that she'd heard about through a friend at school. **It was difficult to get to, hardly any teenage girls were there and it felt quite boring and old-fashioned**, so she never went back. There's **nothing new and exciting in her area for girls like Niamh who aren't sporty** and don't want to commit to the rigid practice schedule of competitive sport. She has **no idea where to find activities that she wants to do and would feel welcome in**.

# Gradually Disengaged Abby

Abby is 16 years old and lives in a busy household in Dublin with her mum, dad, three brothers and one sister. She **enjoys the hustle and bustle of living in the city but also likes trips to the countryside** to see her gran, where life is a bit less hectic.



Abby **has a small group of close friends that she loves spending time with and they all live close by in her estate.** They hang around at each other's houses or visit local parks, where they can chat about life and share makeup tips, trends and funny content online. When she can afford to, Abby also likes going to the cinema or shopping in the city centre. Most places Abby and her friends go to are within walking distance or a bus ride away but **Abby feels frustrated by the lack of variety on offer.** Other than the odd bubble café, **there are no social spaces where she and her friends can hang out and have fun that are welcoming and safe.** So they spend a lot of their spare time just hanging around her estate, which older people in her community really frown upon. Abby's parents don't like her hanging around, especially after dark, and they encourage her to stay as close to home as possible.

Abby is doing the **leaving certificate at school and so studying has become much more**

**important** to her, and her parents. She wants to do well but is **really struggling with the workload**, and not being able to see her friends as much outside of school and do the things she enjoys is upsetting her. She spends a lot of her spare time **chatting with friends online and following quirky celebrities and influencers**, who she finds interesting and aspirational.

Abby used to be very active and really enjoyed playing soccer and basketball in school with her friends, and also did Irish dancing outside of school. As Abby got older, **her friends started to drop out of sport, as they found more interesting things to do and because the teams became far more competitive and cliquy.** She wanted to keep going but felt quite alone, as with fewer friends around to support her, **she became a target for teasing and bullying.** She eventually gave up sport completely and even her Irish dancing, as it just wasn't seen as a popular thing to do as she got older.

During transition year, Abby **had more time on her hands and was really missing the fun she had playing basketball.** A couple of her close friends agreed to go back to basketball with her but outside of school. Abby was excited and started to look for a basketball team in her area but **it was so difficult to find one, she felt deflated and never bothered looking again.** Abby would really like to be more active to **give her a break from schoolwork and home and to have fun with her friends.** She is **nervous about re-joining any team sports though, as she hasn't played for a couple of years** and won't be as good as everyone else. She also **doesn't want to go alone** due to how other girls treated her before. She **can't join activities that are too expensive** and is looking for **something exciting in her area that she can enjoy with her friends.** She's asked around but just can't find anything that she really wants to do.