

What to do when you are alone or feeling lonely

Right now, many people are reporting being alone or feeling lonely. This conversation is really important as the weather starts to cool down, the sky gets darker earlier and we all have personal needs to connect with other human beings, but can't do so because of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Here is a Biblical breakdown of the "alone and lonely feelings" we are experiencing in this season: Jesus tells us that we are not alone and that he is always with us (Matthew 28:20). Jesus' words do not mean that we won't feel the effects of shelter-in-place restrictions or the limited-to-no-human-contact that we're experiencing lately. Difficult as it may be to reconcile Jesus' words with our experience, there is still space for the Lord to connect with us if we will let him in. God wants to engage with us, even (perhaps especially) in the suffering, brokenness, hopelessness, and fear being provoked in our hearts and minds due to the virus (1 Peter 5:7). Ultimately, allowing the love of Christ to control us in turn enables us to accept influence, respond to ourselves, thereby loving ourselves and our neighbor well (Mark 12:30-31; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15). To wrap it up, Paul says it well: "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen." (Ephesians 3:20-21, New International Version, 2011).

Here are five considerations that I have used with those combatting feeling alone in this COVID-19 season. Keep in mind that the last section under WHY is by far the most important, and should not be neglected.

WHO: Certain people are more important to us than others. When we think about who we need to see, there are certain people in our lives that rise above the rest as most supportive, important, and/or meaningful. Seek out these people at the top of your list because they are likely the best people to combat loneliness with you.

TIP: Make a list of the top five people in your life that make you feel most like you. Next, reach out to one of these people today.

WHAT: Certain activities give us life. For me, my runs have been supportive and grounding to my shelter in place restrictions. If running sounds like a one-way ticket to suffering, then find activities that you can do that will occupy your time. A sense of aloneness or feeling lonely can creep in when we are experiencing an activity lull. So, if you have a book that you are working on, a picture painting, or a reorganization project that you have not touched yet, start working on it! The more meaningful the task is to you, the less chance for loneliness to creep in, since you will be getting internal feedback that the task is important, and so are you!

TIP: Find a task that you are wanting to complete in/around your living space and take a step to accomplish this task. Start researching. Start attempting. Start doing.

WHEN: Certain hours of the day can be more isolating than others. Whatever your lonely hour(s) is/are, take time to explore this emotional experience. While this may sound counter-intuitive, dare to explore the loneliness when it is happening, because that feeling is telling you something about yourself, your needs, your experiences, and your relationships.

TIP: [Download this free journal for a plan on how to respond to loneliness in your life.](#)

WHERE: Certain places can make you feel more connected to yourself and others even when you are alone. I know that some people have been able to go to their church when no one else is around, or to a park to sit outside and watch other people coming and going. Being in places where other people congregate safely can combat loneliness without compromising your health values.

TIP: If you are a person of faith, try working with a guided prayer exercise to help you feel connected to God and your experiences. For written prayers, you can look into [The Book of Common Prayer](#), where you'll find topical prayers that are already written for you.

WHY: Bring yourself **with** yourself. This is the most important task when feeling lonely. Many people take an **against** position when someone shares that they feel lonely, like: "You shouldn't feel lonely, we all feel lonely" or "don't be lonely, I am with you". This is NOT HELPFUL. Instead, I would suggest a **with** position that could look something like: "I am lonely with you" or "that makes sense that you feel alone, these are really difficult days". When we take a **with** position, it connects us together. Taking an **against** position because we don't want others to feel bad actually worsens the alone feeling: not only are you still feeling alone, but now you believe you're wrong for feeling alone in the first place. Instead, engage yourself and bring all the feelings along to make sense of your situation.

TIP: Affirm yourself with the phrase "I am feeling alone and I can do something with myself or others".

Too Long/Didn't Read: When feeling lonely, look into special people, places, things, activities to decrease the lonely feeling.

This post originally appeared on www.graysonwallen.com/blog/alone

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