

Dealing *with* Loneliness

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Building 1, Level 5 (1.517) @Lobby C

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“Loneliness is my least favorite thing about life. The thing that I'm most worried about is just being alone without anybody to care for or someone who will care for me.”

These were the words of Hollywood actress, Anne Hathaway. We may think that celebrities like herself would be spared the fear and pain of a lonely heart, but it seemed that even the rich, famous and good-looking are not exempted from it.

Loneliness has been described and expressed in many ways, in songs, writings or shows. Tom Petty talked about being a ‘face in the crowd’, and Christina Perri saw herself as ‘the lonely’.

We all could relate to how a lonely person feels as loneliness is a rather universal human condition, whether it is due to homesickness or a pandemic lockdown. While the feeling of loneliness can be transient or chronic, fleeting or intense, it is known to hit anyone, anytime, anywhere.

It is very unfortunate that loneliness is also known to drive some to turn to unwholesome and detrimental ways to make the miserable feeling go away. Self-harm, alcohol and substance abuse, even looking for love and acceptance in all the wrong places to quell the emptiness inside, etc. just to name a few.

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In an increasingly inter-connected world, it is somewhat ironic that Elizabeth Kapu'uwailani Lindsey should observe: *“From the boardroom to the bedroom, we're connected 24/7, yet loneliness is at an all-time high. More people are reaching for mobile devices than for the hand of someone in need. Where did our humanity go?”*

It is necessary to highlight that loneliness is not the absence of company. As writer, Amy Tan puts it, *“You can be lonely even surrounded by people.”* In other words, being alone is not the same as being lonely.

Being alone every now and then is actually a healthy aspect of life. We would all benefit from stepping away from our social circle and the hustle bustle of everyday life to seek serenity and solitude, and engage in personal reflection.

Being lonely, on the other hand, stems from a sense of not being understood, significant or loved. It leads to alienation and despair. To better deal with it, we need to ensure that our self-appraisal is rooted in sound and healthy sources of security and affirmation. This involves how we see ourselves and what we really believe about ourselves. While we may not be able to escape lonely pangs all the time, we could however, undertake steps to engage, rather than withdraw, and to show empathy, rather than indifference.