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It Isn’t Just You

People are inherently social creatures; when isolated, their identity and mental state eventually deteriorate. While someone may feel like they have an individual identity that is all their own, but instead people mostly identify themselves in relation to others; when people are isolated for long enough the breaks down. Who a person is may seem like its something independent from other people, they are really defined by a combination of their personality and interactions with others. The people around a person and the groups they identify with affect their actions and beliefs. A group or individual may even define themselves as the opposition to a particular position or group. For example, in Ayn Rand’s Anthem, the main character escapes a collectivist society that has literally thrown humanity back to the stone age, and defines himself, and fellow escapees, as individuals. Even though social contact may get exhausting, it is needed to keep a healthy mental state. People locked in isolation in prison eventually lose grip on reality, as without social interaction they cannot really know what is real or not. Without much or significant social interaction, a person can get stuck in their own head, which is not necessarily a good thing. Often times this can lead to depression. In extreme cases, loneliness can make people change their views of others or even make them do horrible things. For example, the internet community called incels, or involuntary celibates, is a community of mostly men who cannot get a girlfriend no matter what they try. Often times incels grow to have horrible views of women, and even the men who date them; which has in some extreme cases led to at least one shooting. Someone’s identity is inextricably tied to that of others, whether that be through being in a group or by defining yourself as against one, but when that gets stripped away people tend to break a little bit.