



Are You Feeling Lonely?

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Loneliness is the state of distress or discomfort that results when one perceives a gap between one's desires for social connection and actual experiences of it. Even some people who are surrounded by others throughout the day—or are in a long-lasting marriage—still experience a deep and pervasive loneliness.

Research suggests that loneliness poses serious threats to well-being as well as long-term physical health. A number of unfavorable outcomes have been linked to loneliness. In addition to its association with depressive symptoms and other forms of mental illness, loneliness is a risk factor for heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, and arthritis, among other diseases. Lonely people are also twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's disease, research suggests. The state of chronic loneliness may trigger adverse physiological responses such as the increased production of stress hormones, hinder sleep, and result in weakened immunity. The Bible acknowledges the danger of being and feeling alone in *Ecclesiastes 4:12* "And if one prevail against him/her, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken." We are meant to be in meaningful relationships, in community.

If you are feeling lonely, what can you do about it? Acknowledging our loneliness can be a first step in making it better, and that takes courage. Reach out to others, virtually or in person. Be willing to share something of your feelings, your challenges, and your spiritual journey with them. Ask others how they are doing, check in on people you might have lost contact with. Look for opportunities to serve in a meaningful way, in your community or church. Invite someone to a time just designed for connection over a cup of coffee, virtually or in person. Give thought to your support network around you.....who needs to be deleted, who needs to be added? Design a fun time with your family at home or with extended family virtually. Together, life truly is better!