

alone, is linked to a special sensitivity and quality of perception. She created a moving series of photos taken at such moments. (4) In a fourth intervention, the artist sits down to draw flowers with people. The drawing of flowers is an accessible, expressive activity that enables open conversation. Engagement with the idea of the flower is quite existential, as flowers are both an exuberant expression of life force and an expression of the temporary nature of life as they wilt and decay. Sitting side by side while drawing flowers allows the safe, indirect expression of the emotions that arise in the course of a deeply human conversation.

After the theme of loneliness was thus explored, the artists and designers came together and made a “nomological network” (see figure 8.3) to capture their experiences. This provided a rich overview of the real complex concept of loneliness, as a human and lived experience that comes in many guises. In the course of the investigation, the concept of loneliness gradually lost its purely negative connotation. In fact, the ability to “use and enjoy solitude” is one of the eight factors that the U.K. charity the Mental Health Foundation lists as characterizing good mental health. Within Eastern spiritual traditions, this is called “aloneness,” and the ability to be alone and in harmony is seen as a great achievement.

6 FRAMES

The subtle reflection of the artists’ interventions has changed the direction of the project completely, away from seeing loneliness as a problem that should somehow be “solved” through an intervention. One of the most fruitful frames of those adopted for the second half of the project was that of “aloneness,” or to put it in a more activist language: to be “for loneliness.” This leads to thinking about loneliness in terms of the inner strength of people, and to thinking about possible ways in which people can gather and muster that strength.

7 FUTURES

This frame was applied to the plight of one of the groups known to suffer because of the loneliness of the position they find themselves in: people who are acting as caregivers for a sick family member. Frames were created to address the needs of people in different stages of the caregiving process (each coming with their own type of isolation and loneliness), focusing on subtle issues like the possibility for self-expression (the expression of identity that may be crushed through the pressure of constant care), the possible feelings