The Most Surprising Truth About Combating Loneliness

Studies show that nearly half of us experience some periods of feeling frustrated

and alone — here's what to do

by *Lucinda Bakken White*

In a world that's more connected than ever, it might be surprising to know that we are still prone to loneliness. Studies show that nearly half of adults experience times of feeling lonely throughout their lives.

When my youngest child left for college, I felt an intense heartache in my chest. It might seem obvious that I was missing my children, but at that point in my life, I "missed" myself more. Feeling disconnected, misunderstood and depleted, I knew from previous experience that I was aching for a deeper connection within.

Feelings of loneliness arise from our own perceptions and desires. We can be successful and surrounded by others — and still feel lonely.

Here are five ways to help combat those lonely blues:

1.) Get out into nature. Interestingly, spending some alone time in nature can make you feel more connected to the world at large.

The fresh air, smells, sounds and beauty, are all restorative. And in that quiet stillness, you'll be able to get more in touch with your own inner feelings. Often we aren't upset for the reasons we think. Give yourself some time in nature to create a deeper connection to your inner self and the natural world around you.

2.) Observe your mindset. It's our perception of events in our lives that dictates our reality. Be mindful of negativity. How do you perceive what's happening in your life? If you tend to focus on what's not working, instead of what is going right, you're more apt to feel frustrated and alone. Challenge the negative stories in your mind.

When you expect the best in life, it tends to have a better flow — and challenges can be more easily met.

3.) Practice self-love. When you advocate for your own well-being, you'll shift away from a mindset that can lead to feelings of loneliness. Show yourself the love and compassion you'd show a loved one. Incorporate self-love practices into your daily life. Buy yourself a special bubble bath, lotion, or flowers. If you can't afford a manicure, pedicure or massage, give yourself one. Caregiving is transformative.

4.) Limit your electronics time. While social media can be a wonderful way to connect and keep up with others, it can also increase feelings of loneliness.

It's great to see your friend off on a Hawaiian getaway, but snippets of others' lives usually aren't very fulfilling for our own. Life is not a competition — and relying on virtual connections can lead to an even greater sense of disconnect. Set a daily time limit for social media and stick to it. This will give you more time for meaningful face-to-face interactions.

5.) Foster healthy relationships. It's very important to surround yourself with people who want what's best for you and inspire you to be the best version of yourself. If you have toxic people in your life, they're only going to weigh you down and add to a negative mindset. Give your time and attention to people worthy of it.

Any steps you take toward developing authentic relationships with yourself, nature or others will move you closer to the healthy, happy life you deserve.

These are just a handful of ways to help combat loneliness. Developing a rapport with yourself and your environment is just as important as connecting with other people.

Nature will enliven you, and your inner self will inform you of your passions. Loneliness has a tendency to feed off itself, perpetuating the problem. Any steps you take toward developing authentic relationships with yourself, nature or others will move you closer to the healthy, happy life you deserve.

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