

Are you feeling alone?

You're invited over to a friend's house for a gathering. When you arrive everyone seems to be having a good time. People are talking and flirting about. Although you want to join in, you're hesitant to get involved in a conversation. Hesitant because earlier that day you told someone about an idea of yours and they insulted you and your idea. You feel distant and wish for a sense of connection, a connection that can only come from another person. Even as you're surrounded by people, you feel alone. This is just an example of what some people experience. An experience where the end result is a feeling of being alone.

Alone, a feeling most people share but would rather suppress than talk about. It may stem from a loss, a separation, a divorce, or from a feeling of rejection. When people experience these situations, they feel other people disconnecting from them and they feel more and more isolated. This disconnected and isolated feeling is something we refer to as *loneliness*. As other people move further and further away, we tend to think thoughts like, 'What did I do wrong?' or 'What's wrong with me?'. Studies have shown that one of the most common reasons for depression is, in fact, loneliness.

Loneliness is also due in part to our being more disconnected and isolated from others by assimilating our lives with technological crutches. The '*human element*' has been replaced by '*technology*' which was marketed as a way to improve the time and quality of life. The fact is, in some ways, it has done the opposite. Handwriting someone a letter where the recipient sees the handwriting and feels the writers' intent has been replaced with the popular internet phrase '*You've Got Mail*'. Remember when you would get a card or a letter in the mail from a loved one? It had a better effect on you than an e-mail; didn't it? We can even consider the technology used to post and read this message as an example. Time spent interacting with family and friends has been replaced by solitary time watching television or playing with the latest technology. People are more focused on what the television/technology is showing them rather than what their family and friends can give or share with them: companionship and camaraderie, the basic elements of '*non-loneliness*'.

In today's society, loneliness is one of the more rapidly growing forms of anxiety and depression. It is also something that people don't like to talk about. They would rather suppress it than bring it out in the open and share it with others who share in their feelings of loneliness. That which is most private is also most common. If they share their feelings with others who have the same feelings, would they feel alone sharing something they have in common? Even though some people may experience the feeling of 'alone', they can take comfort in knowing that they are not alone in that experience.