

# Are You Lonely in Your Relationship?

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Loneliness is a very painful feeling. When I'm working with a client who is struggling with a substance addiction, such as food or alcohol, and I ask them to look inside to see what feeling they are avoiding with the substance, the answer is often "loneliness.: You might believe that the people who feel lonely are people who are not in a relationship, but just as often, they are lonely in their relationship. Being in a relationship does not always take away loneliness -- it often causes it.

Loneliness is the feeling we get in our heart and soul when we want to be connected with someone, and someone is not available to connect with. This can certainly occur when we are alone, but it also occurs in relationships when one or both partners are unavailable for connection -- due to being angry, withdrawn, tired or ill.

Loneliness is not the same as aloneness. The empty feeling within of aloneness comes from various forms of self-abandonment, such as not attending to our feelings, judging ourselves, turning to various addictions to avoid our painful feelings, or making someone else responsible for our feelings. We will always feel alone and abandoned when we are abandoning ourselves. We will also feel lonely when we are abandoning ourselves, because when we are not connected with ourselves, we cannot connect with another. Feeling both alone and lonely can lead to a deep experience of despair.

Just because we are alone does not mean we will feel that painful feeling of inner emptiness or loneliness. If we are loving and valuing ourselves, then we can thoroughly enjoy our solitude, and also connect with others when others are open to connection.

## What Creates Loneliness in a Relationship?

- You may feel lonely with your partner if your heart is closed because you are protecting yourself from hurt with your anger or withdrawal. You cannot connect when you are closed and protected.
- You may feel lonely with your partner when your partner is closed and angry, or withdrawn and uncommunicative. You will feel lonely if your partner deliberately shuts you out with work, TV, food, alcohol, hobbies, the Internet and so on.
- You may feel lonely when you are trying to have control over your partner's feelings by giving yourself up. Being inauthentic in order to control how your partner feels about you does not lead to authentic connection.
- You may feel lonely with your partner when one or both of you are closed to learning when a conflict arises. The unwillingness to have open communication about important issues creates walls between you.
- You may feel lonely if you or your partner use your sexual relationship as a form of control.
- You will feel lonely if you or your partner stays up in your mind rather than being together with open hearts. Intellectualization can be interesting at times, but after a while it can feel flat and lonely.
- You may feel lonely if your partner judges you regarding your thoughts, feelings, looks or actions. Judgment creates disconnection, and disconnection can be very lonely.
- You may feel lonely when you or your partner can't connect due to being overly tired, frazzled and overwhelmed, or ill.

Anything you do or your partner does that disconnects you from yourself and/or your partner may create loneliness. Loneliness goes away when we connect with each other from our hearts. Disconnection occurs anytime one partner closes his or her heart to protect or control.

### **We stay connected with each other when:**

- We are willing to be vulnerable and authentic, speaking our truth without blame or judgment.
- We are willing to feel our painful feelings and lovingly manage them and learn from them -- taking responsibility for all our feelings rather than avoiding them with protective, controlling behaviors. When we are connected with ourselves, we can connect with our partner.
- We are willing to learn about ourselves and our partner, especially in conflict.
- We are caring and compassionate with ourselves and our partner.
- We make time to be together to talk, play, make love, laugh, learn and grow. We are interested in personal and relationship growth. Time together, and growing in our ability to love ourselves and share our love with each other, are high priorities for both partners.

When each of you is devoted to evolving in your ability to love yourself and each other, your relationship has a high chance of staying connected. Partners who are connected with themselves and each other rarely feel lonely.

*Margaret Paul, Ph.D. is a relationship expert, best-selling author, and co-creator of the powerful Inner Bonding® self-healing process, recommended by actress Lindsay Wagner and singer Alanis Morissette, and featured on Oprah. To begin learning how to love and connect with yourself so that you can connect with others, take advantage of our free Inner Bonding eCourse, receive Free Help, and take our 12-Week eCourse, "The Intimate Relationship Toolbox" - the first two weeks are free!*

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