

CHAPTER 2

COMBATING THE PROBLEM OF LONELINESS

Loneliness is a self-centered, self-focused emotion. It comes from an over-concern about oneself. It is the inability to communicate — a feeling of being isolated. People have a lot they'd like to say or express, but they don't know how or else they are afraid to express it. Sometimes you can find the loneliest person in a whole room full of people.

All of us from time to time will suffer from the feeling of loneliness to one degree or another. For this reason we must all understand what causes people to feel lonely and also how to recognize a person who is suffering from this trauma. There are ways to overcome this feeling and methods to help others conquer it.

I. CAUSES AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS FOR LONELINESS

1. The Cold and Stifling Influence of Society

Society today is becoming more and more depersonalized. Ours is the age of the computer and the impersonal assembly line approach. Mankind is becoming more preoccupied with his problems and survival than he is with anything else.

2. Being Programed for Loneliness from Childhood

People can program themselves for loneliness from childhood by not constantly widening their circle of friends. Sticking with the same people all the time and never adding new names to one's list of friendships prevents a person from developing the art of acquiring friends. When circumstances separate them from their familiar circle, they find themselves lonely and afraid to reach out to others.

3. Preoccupation With Self

Concentrating too much on self and one's own moods, condition and feelings causes one to be even more lonely.

4. Change of Environment

Stepping into a new environment where people and circumstances are different from the old familiar faces and routines can cause loneliness. Changing one's environment can be compared to a baby bird that is used to its nest where it's warm and secure. In order for it to become strong, mature and healthy, it must grow to look out to the world around it. When it is forced to leave the security of the nest, it will be frightened by its new experiences and won't feel comfortable with the rush of cool air under its wings where it was always warm. Until it accepts this change in life, the bird will never really experience the thrill of flying.

If you are to mature and grow into a well-balanced personality you must also take a few daring steps and experience new challenges life has to offer

5. Looking within to Past Memories

Dwelling on the pleasant memories of a comfortable past — friends, family and social life — can cause loneliness. Thinking about home and old friends is not bad in itself. But these thoughts should not consume so much of your time that you are neglecting the opportunity to make new friends, or neglecting to take full advantage of all that Ambassador College has to offer.

6. Homesickness

For many, this may be the first time away from home. A feeling of loneliness or homesickness may be only natural — but does not have to be long lasting.

7. New Pressures & Challenges

A new way of life with added pressures and demands such as term papers, tests, homework, club meetings, etc., may contribute to your feeling of loneliness.

8. A Fear of Self-disclosure — or a Lack of Self-confidence

As a stranger, you may feel uncomfortable and uneasy about meeting new people. This is generally because you fear others will discover your inadequacies, will not like you or accept you for what you are. The tendency is to withdraw and enjoy privacy within yourself.

9. Growing Pains

A new level of maturity must be faced, now that you are in college, and it may prove more difficult without the familiar crutches of family and close friends to help you make the adjustment.

10. Failure to Walk With God

The loneliest feeling you can experience is when you are cut off from God in this evil and darkened world. Get in contact with God and your symptoms of loneliness will start to disappear.

II. STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO CONQUER LONELINESS

1. Whole-hearted participation in classes, work and college activities
2. Don't hibernate in the dorm feeling sorry for yourself and expect the feeling of loneliness to go away.
3. Begin at once to make new friends.
4. Consider the fact that there are many others in the same situation as you and that you can be a big help to them by being friendly and giving encouragement.
5. Think of others first. Gear your mind to this end and discipline yourself in giving your time and service to others.
6. When you feel especially lonely, strike up a conversation with someone as soon as possible. Ask questions and be interested in finding out about his life. Soon you will find that you feel a lot better.
7. Smile! Don't just smile with your lips — smile from deep down inside. Show yourself friendly and you will begin to develop new friendships. (Proverbs 18:24.)
8. Assume people will like you and you'll discover they will.
9. Be approachable — make it easy for people to talk to you by showing them attention and being responsive.
10. Get others talking about subjects they're familiar with or are interested in. You can help others while you are helping yourself get over feeling lonely.
11. Sincerely compliment people by noting their accomplishments and successes. Notice little things such as a nice hair do, new dress, their inspiring examples. Be genuine — don't flatter.
12. Be a good listener. Listen with attention, interest and respect. Don't change the conversation to yourself — get them talking about themselves.
13. Eat with others and take time to talk — aim to learn as much as you can about others.
14. Do something for someone else — look for ways to help other people. Do something/anything for others. If you're good at writing prose or poetry, write something to him about himself. If you're good at handicrafts, make a gift. If you use your talents to do something for someone else you will both enjoy it much more. You will be learning to love.
15. Remember that part of your education at Ambassador College is personality development and building the qualities of leadership. A real leader doesn't have time to be lonely, because he is so involved and interested in others, that he doesn't have time to think about himself overmuch.
16. Don't make the mistake of making a few friends and then ceasing to widen your circle. Continue to make new friends regularly. This doesn't mean to forsake old friends but learn to include new people.

17. Beware of the pitfall of getting "involved" seriously with someone early in your college career. When you are feeling lonely, it is easy to attach yourself to the first friendly person who shows an interest in you. Dating widely throughout your college years provides an important outlet for personality development. Don't hinder yourself by getting serious too soon.
18. Don't forget God or your primary reason for coming to Ambassador College. Never allow physical interests to crowd out the spiritual values.

III. HOW TO RECOGNIZE A LONELY PERSON

1. One who is shy and retiring and stays to himself/herself.
2. One who is unhappy and rejected.
3. Some may take the opposite appearance and be loud — bragging, etc., hiding behind a false front of bravado — when really he feels very lonely and insecure.
4. Discouragement is a sign of loneliness due to lack of involvement and participation.
5. A lonely person reflects a negative attitude to one degree or another.
6. A person's tone of voice can be a key to identifying a lonely person, whether it be mousey, quiet and soft-spoken or loud and boisterous.

IV. HOW YOU CAN HELP OTHERS WHO ARE LONELY

1. Invite them to join you and your friends for a particular get-together. Then be sure to include them in your conversation, asking them questions and getting to know them. Spend more time with them than with your other friends to help them feel more comfortable and accepted.
2. When you see others sitting alone or off to themselves and looking unhappy, strike up a conversation. Sit down and get to know them, draw them out, and let them know that you are interested in their lives. Afterwards when you see them again, try to make it a point to stop and say hello, take time to see how they are doing — be concerned.
3. Ask them to help you on a special project for club or some other class or college function. Help them get involved.
4. If you are in the same class, you might start a study group — this could be helpful to you as well as to them. Be on the alert for ways that you can provide a social outlet for others and take the initiative and offer an invitation. By a study group I mean studying for tests together or mutually working on class projects, etc.
5. Be responsive and approachable, don't brush people off because you have "important" things to do.

CONCLUSION

At Ambassador College you have the unique opportunity to be with others who are learning God's laws and who have God's Holy Spirit. You need not be alone. Loneliness is a negative emotion and one that God from the beginning did not intend that man should experience. Genesis 2:18 says, "And the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone" Loneliness is an emotion that causes you to be a negative person, and in order to fight it, you must replace it with the positive emotion of love and outgoing concern for others.

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