

- Make use of campus resources. Find out about organizations and activities on campus. Examples are clubs, churches, part time jobs and volunteer work. Ask for ideas from someone who has been around longer than you have.
- Work at developing your social skills. Practice getting to know others and letting them know you.

Don't judge new people on the basis of past relationships. Instead, try to see each person you meet from a fresh perspective.

- Intimate friendships usually develop gradually as people learn to share their inner feelings. Avoid rushing into intimate friendships by sharing too quickly or expecting that others will. Let the process develop naturally.

Value all of your friendships and their unique characteristics rather than believing that only a romantic relationship will relieve your loneliness.

Developing Yourself

- Think of yourself as a total person. Don't neglect other needs just because your companionship or friendship needs are not being met.
- Make sure you follow habits of good nutrition, regular exercise and adequate sleep. Don't let academics, hobbies and other interests slide.
- Use your alone time to get to know yourself. Think of it as an opportunity to develop independence and to learn to take care of your own emotional needs. You can grow in important ways during time alone.

- Use your alone time to enjoy yourself rather than just existing until you will be with others. Avoid merely vegetating - deal with your situation actively. Recognize that there are many creative and enjoyable ways to use your alone time.
- Whenever possible, use what you have enjoyed in the past to help you decide how to enjoy your alone time now.
- Keep things in your environment (such as books, puzzles or music) that you can use to enjoy in your alone time.
- Explore the possibility of doing things alone that you usually do with other people (like going to the movies).
- Don't decide ahead of time how you're going to feel about an activity. Keep an open mind.

In summary, don't define yourself as a lonely person. No matter how bad you feel, loneliness will diminish or even disappear when you focus attention and energy on needs you can currently meet and when you learn to develop new ways to meet your other needs. **Don't wait for your feelings to get you going - get going and good feelings will eventually catch up with you.**

You are welcome to stop by or call to make an appointment:

**131 Van Housen Hall
315-267-2330
8:30-4:30 pm**



THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
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LONELINESS

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Growth and change during college years produces a variety of feelings in students. In addition to feelings of excitement and anticipation, there may also be feelings of loneliness. Loneliness is not necessarily being alone. We may be alone for long periods without feeling at all lonely. On the other hand, we may feel lonely in a familiar setting without really understanding why. The best way to begin to understand loneliness is to examine some of the ways people experience it.

You may feel lonely when:

- you're alone and you don't feel you have a choice not to be.
- you feel that you're lacking attachments you had in the past.
- you are facing changes in your life - a new school, town, job or other changes.
- you feel there's no one in your life with whom you can share your feelings and experiences.
- your self-perceptions are that you're unacceptable, unlovable, not worthwhile even if others don't share those perceptions.

Misconceptions About Loneliness

Loneliness can be made more intense by what you tell yourself it means. College students are particularly susceptible to the following misconceptions regarding loneliness:

"Loneliness is a sign of weakness, or immaturity."

"There's something wrong with me if I'm lonely. These should be the best years of my life."

"I'm the only one who feels this way."

If you believe these misconceptions you may believe that loneliness results from a defect in your personality. Research suggests that college students who think of loneliness as a defect tend to have the following difficulties:

- Greater difficulty in taking social risks, in asserting themselves, in making phone calls to initiate social contact, in introducing themselves to others, in participating in groups and in enjoying themselves at parties.
- Less skill in self-disclosure, less responsiveness to others and a greater tendency to approach social encounters with cynicism and mistrust.
- More likelihood of evaluating themselves and others in negative terms and more tendency to expect others to reject them.

Lonely students often report feeling depressed, angry, afraid and misunderstood. They may become highly critical of themselves, overly sensitive or self-pitying or they may become critical of others, blaming others for their situations.

When these things happen, lonely students often begin doing things which perpetuate their loneliness. Some students, for example, become discouraged, lose their sense of desire and motivation to get involved in new situations and isolate themselves from people and activities. Other students deal with loneliness by becoming too quickly and deeply involved with people and activities without evaluating the consequences of their involvement. They may later find themselves in unsatisfying relationships or over-committed to academic or extracurricular activities.

What To Do About Loneliness

The alternative to viewing loneliness as a defect or as an unalterable personality characteristic is to recognize that

loneliness is something that can be changed. It is also important to know that loneliness is a common experience. According to a recent national survey, one quarter of all adults experience painful loneliness at least every few weeks, and the incidence among adolescents and college students is even higher. Loneliness is neither a permanent state nor "bad" in itself. Instead it should be viewed more accurately as a signal or indicator of important needs that are going unmet.

You, or anyone, should take action when important needs aren't being met. Begin by identifying which needs are not being met in your specific situation. Your loneliness may result from a variety of needs. It may involve the need to develop a circle of friends or a special friend. It may involve learning to do things for yourself, without friends. Or it may involve learning to feel better or more confident about yourself in general.

Developing Friendships

There are a number of ways to begin meeting your needs for friendship. Consider the following:

- Remind yourself that your loneliness will not last forever.

In doing the things you ordinarily do in the course of your daily schedule, look for ways to get involved with people. For example, you can;

- Eat with others, sit with new people class and find a study or exercise partner.
- Put yourself in new situations where you will meet people. Engage in activities in which you have genuine interest. In so doing you will be more likely to meet the kind of people you are interested in meeting, people with whom you have something in common.