Loneliness
Topic: #103
Category: Relationships

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him. Genesis 2:18 (NASB)

According to a new study conducted at the University of Chicago, persistent loneliness may lead to an increase in the rate of blood pressure. The study reveals a direct relation between loneliness and increase in blood pressure which began showing up in the second year of the study, and continuing on until the study ended after 4 years. Senior scientist, Louise Hawkley in her article wrote that, "Loneliness behaved as though it is a unique health-risk factor in its own right." She added "loneliness is characterized by a motivational impulse to connect with others but also a fear of negative evaluation, rejection and disappointment." (1)

Loneliness is depression's common friend. Everyone experiences loneliness at some point in their life, but some find it harder to make meaningful interpersonal relationships than others. Consider two types of loneliness:
Social isolation: not having friends who share your interests and concerns and provide a sense of community
Emotional isolation: not having deep personal relationships that provide a sense of attachment.

Discussion Questions:

1. Are you lonely? Do you have s*ocial* or *emotional* isolation?
2. What contributes to *your* loneliness?
3. How can you overcome loneliness? (refer to handout)

Learning a new relationship skill requires commitment and a plan of action. Define what you want to achieve.

1. Make a list of positive outcomes that will result from your achievement.
2. Identify specific skills and behaviors that are necessary for your success.
3. Practice over and over. You'll probably experience these stages:
   a. Feeling self-conscious about your behavior…continue on
   b. Feeling of phoniness…get encouragement from group
   c. Feeling more skilled, but mechanical..keep going
   d. Feeling natural…enjoy and report your success!

(1) Hawkley, Louise C.; *Loneliness Predicts Increased Blood Pressure, Psychology & Aging*, Mar2010, Vol. 25 Issue 1, p132-141, 10p; (*AN 48806726*)

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