

When I Feel Lonely - 9 Cures for Loneliness

What do you do when you feel lonely? In this post, Ron Hughes shares some of his cures for loneliness and encourages others to contribute their tips also.

Are you experiencing loneliness? Please feel free to [contact us](#) for prayer support.

Christmas Eve And Loneliness

On **Christmas Eve**, 1979, the staff in the small country diner did their best to get the last few customers served and out in the hope of hanging the **“closed”** sign on the door a few minutes early. Said customers were a family with three young children who needed a break on the long drive to grandma’s house, a couple of truckers who had stopped for a coffee before tackling the last leg of their run back to the warehouse, and a young man eating macaroni and cheese by himself.

Feeling isolated, with no one else at his table, he attempted to engage the waitress in casual conversation. To put her at ease about his intentions he started by mentioning that his wife, a nurse, was working in Toronto. He had finished his job earlier in the week and had come alone to the small farming community where he was doing some renovations on an old farmhouse. This was the first Christmas eve he had ever spent alone and he felt lonely. Phone service had not been set up in the house yet so he couldn’t even call his family. Overhearing conversations around him and small-talk with the waitress was the only human interaction to be had in three days. He had never felt so isolated and never been aware of needing human interaction before.

What Are Some Cures For Loneliness?

I know all this because it is a snippet from my own story. That lonely Christmas episode did not last long, fortunately. By **New Year’s Eve**, my wife had finished her contract at the hospital and joined me on the farm and our social life in our new community began to develop. However, I never forgot the powerful emotions I experienced that evening.

Since then, I’ve thought about it, read about it, and helped a few lonely souls who were at the point of being overwhelmed by it. Here are a few observations—a **“top nine”** list, if you like, that I’ve found helpful to keep in mind.

1. Loneliness Is A Feeling

I experience the feeling of loneliness because I’m alone. I might be absolutely alone, or just in an environment where nobody knows me or **wants to connect with me**. My loneliness involves two factors 1) I am alone 2) I don’t want to be. (The fact is, sometimes I actually like to be **“people free”** for a while.) I remember that my feeling of loneliness arises from my circumstances, not from me or anything about me. I am not lonely because nobody loves me, or because I screwed up, or because I am somehow unacceptable. When I feel lonely, I remember it is a feeling.

2. Learn To Take Initiative

Though I wish it were otherwise, I’ve learned that others can’t read my mind (or my feelings), I have to take some initiative and make an approach. In these days of so many ways to **connect with others**, it’s not too difficult to take the first step. Sometimes, I just need to hear a friendly voice. I’m not afraid to say it. I dial the number, and when the other person answers I get it out there right away. **“I don’t have anything big on my mind... Just being friendly.”** When I feel lonely, I remember to be intentional.

3. Be Careful About Emotions

I have to be careful about listening to songs, reading poems, or watching movies about loneliness. They just make me obsess about it and destroy any motivation I might have had to do something about it. The more I focus on my own loneliness, the more I make **“fixing it”** everyone else’s responsibility. And that’s hardly fair, especially when I won’t tell them I need a little attention. When I feel lonely, I’m careful about the **“emotional food”** I serve myself.

4. Take Control Of Your Loneliness

I refuse to let loneliness become an emotional habit. I put my **“anti-isolation plan”** into action. It takes some effort, particularly if I’ve let myself get into a funk, but reaching out to a friend or two will bear fruit. Oh! And don’t give up easily. I once had to make more than a dozen calls before I found someone who’d spend some time with me. Instead of becoming more depressed the more I got turned down, I began to see it as kind of a game. Imagine having so many friends who were too busy to see me! Who would be the

lucky winner? When I feel lonely, I take control.

5. Give Others Your Attention

I know (and I'm guessing you know) people who live alone, or in difficult relationships, and I've found they are always up for a chat, a visit, some practical help, or a quick visit to a coffee shop. Inevitably, hearing about them and their problems, puts me and my problems into perspective. One thing I've noticed when out walking is that older people like to be greeted. A nod, a smile, and a cheerful **"Good day,"** can be almost guaranteed to get you a positive response. Great therapy for everyone! When I feel lonely, I give other people some of my attention.

6. Be Present For Those Around You

Maybe, like me, you often feel **lonely in groups**. When that happens, I know it's because I've withdrawn emotionally. (Of course, I always have a good reason for that!) When I start to sense isolation in a group, I observe the odd numbers and attach myself to one person alone, or a group of three or five. Somehow, odd number groups always seem more open to me. Approach the twos and fours and you're likely to feel even more like an outsider. When I feel lonely, I make a point of being present for the people around me.

7. Pull Back On Your Expectations

Instead of approaching social situations with **"the way this has to work"** already fixed in my head, I try to be adventurous. Let come what comes. It probably won't be what you were expecting, or even hoping for, but it will get you connected with others. Come up with some creative questions to throw monkey wrenches into the usual conversations. When I feel lonely, I pull back on my expectations.

8. Be Nice To Others

You know you crave human interaction; so does everyone else. Take the soft, gentle approach you wish people would adopt with you and offer someone some attention, empathy, compassion, even some practical assistance. Being **"nice"** is often a good first step in breaking the ice and developing a relationship. I admit my natural inclination is often to be a **"grumpy old man,"** a curmudgeon of sorts, ready with a quick cynical or sarcastic comment. I've learned that doesn't work for me! When I feel lonely, **I try to reach out to people.**

Remember That God Will Never Leave You

I've noticed that sometimes my perceptions don't line up with reality. That is especially true in regard to the matter of loneliness. As a Christian, I have **God's promise** that He will never leave me or forsake me. Sometimes when things are really bad, I may feel that He has, but I have his word that He hasn't. This is true even when I'm abandoned by everyone. The author of **Psalm 27** mentions that even if his own parents were to desert him, God never would. So, when I feel lonely, I remember that I'm never alone. God has promised to be with me.

Why only 9 tips? It's one of those odd groups that calls for more participation. So join in the discussion and come up with the perfect 10 to finish the list and help us all to feel valued and connected.

Ron Hughes

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