



Isolation and Solitude

“The death of a loved one can lead to loneliness. I have concluded that this type of loneliness is simply having something you don’t want and wanting something you can no longer have.”

~Tolulope Olajid, Balanced Wheel

It’s true that everyone grieves in their own way and there is no “one-size-fits-all” for working through our sorrow and loss. There are, however, some unhealthy grieving habits we can fall into such as numbing our pain with substances, overwork, shopping, or other excesses.

Another of those is self-isolation.

Self-isolation is when a grieving person intentionally stays away from others during the grieving process. Those who self-isolate sometimes feel it is “easier” to handle their grief this way. However, it often just prolongs the grief.

“Over time, I realized that my loneliness morphed into solitude. I realized what I also wanted was to be by myself, get away from people and temporarily escape the pressures and decisions of everyday life. I noticed that there is absolutely no harm in turning inward – reflecting on my loss, and getting in touch with my deepest feelings is a normal response that I should not fear.”

What are some ways to cope with grief-related isolation while we find our way to being comfortable with solitude?

- Help others. Volunteer. An act of service is a great way to escape your inner world and gain perspective. Possibly consider something *not* related to substance use.
- Join a grief/bereavement support group. It can be comforting to know that there are always groups available, either in-person or online, to share your experiences with grief. There are likely to be people involved in these groups who have experienced self-isolation.
- Let others (especially children) know if and when you need to be alone so that they won’t feel rejected. Listen to podcasts, watch videos and read books about real people who have gone through similar experiences. It can help you feel less alone.
- Make a note of the times you feel most lonely and try to change your routine to make those times less lonely. Make plans for the future – but give yourself permission not to keep them. Having something to look forward to, or even feel semi-obligated to, can be a motivator.
- Move - get up out of the chair and do some physical activity, however small. Take a walk, change the scenery. Revive interest in an old hobby or try a new skill. Start a journal or a poetry notebook. Pick up needlework or painting. Start playing guitar again.
- When people reach out, be honest with them about your emotional state. Don’t say you’re “fine” when you’re not.

Who in your circle provides the most support to you, who you’re not afraid to let them see your true feelings? Allow them in, instead of shutting them out.

Compiled from writings from Tolulope Olajid, Pattie Vargas and various other sites

Commented [MB1]: @Kathy Strain I reviewed and branded, etc. but didn’t have time to redo the bullets so they are aligned. They may need to be retyped - or at least reformatted. Can you please do this and then save as a PDF and upload? This is the topic for next Tues grief group. Thanks!