

# GOOD LIVING

## In Faith

Feeling alone may be a blessing in disguise, writes **Fiona Grace**.

# LOVE loneliness

What if what we have defined as loneliness is actually an opportunity to open into a new relationship with the "truth of being" or what older religions call God?

What if delving into this space could answer all the questions you have ever had, and these answers came to you as a deep wisdom you just know to be true? What if exploring this space actually helped you to be truly happy?

People now in the western world are being treated for feelings such as anxiety and depression, loneliness and confusion when maybe these feelings, this inner pull to "get away from it all" and "retreat inside" is actually a craving that can give us the space to ask, and receive answers to the big questions of life.

Moving into and being in this space is not valued highly enough, or even respected, in our culture. Of course no-one wants to feel bad or lonely or sad but sometimes these feelings are unavoidable and actually extremely worthwhile.

I had what society would label as depression for a period. I realised years later it was actually the "essential loneliness" that allowed me the space I was craving in my life. This space gave me a lot of solitary time to mull over the big questions of life and the answers were slowly received. Surprisingly, in the middle of it I found a gentle joy which was not related to other people, which I can only describe as a true relationship between myself and God.

Being in this space can let us really reach the bottom and touch down to the real realities of life. An alcoholic reaching rock bottom before they can change their lives is a dramatic example, but we can have smaller, gentler and extremely personal descents to the bottom, followed by renewal. In religious terms, we can liken this to mini-resurrections, the pain and death on the cross, the utter devastation, and then the silent alone time in the cave, three days of complete solitude where the soul communes, and in a way, "rises again".

In nature, an animal grieving for its deceased littermate is not having a good time and is far from leading a fulfilling life, but it will stay still and grieve long enough that it is clear to come out and move



on. The process is important, natural, timely and complete.

Many relationship problems are perhaps caused by people looking to another to fill the space that only "essential loneliness" can. There is a delicate balance in loving and supporting someone yet knowing that they have all they need to get through back to full health. Sometimes letting go can be the most healing thing you can do.

True intimacy is when people can be together, each having their own "essential loneliness", time and space to process their own individual lives.

"Essential loneliness" is an important space to honour in yourself and others. If initial smaller promptings for the space are not met or cut short, then this repression can build up into larger life changes, divorce, leaving jobs, cities, and even life itself.

We need to learn to give time, respect and honour to this calling in our lives so we can fully process it to its natural completion. In my life "essential loneliness" is now integrated into the rest of my life and I frequently take the time to listen to

its voice, respect its needs and give space for its expression.

In the future this space will be more valued, protected and understood. It could be called mulling over, "being" or connection to soul. It is intuitive. Walking the dog, running, gardening, taking a fishing trip, painting, prayer, yoga or meditation, whatever it is for you, is worthwhile.

In the older religions, church services and time for prayer or meditation often allowed time for this space. With the breakdown of older religious forms, we will need to create places in the future where we can feel a sense of togetherness or brotherhood with our "essential loneliness" integrated fully into our lives.

Loneliness or solitude is an integral part of walking the middle road, and living a full and contented life. Honour, respect, allow, and with gracious acceptance, love it.

### THE AUTHOR

Fiona Grace is an artist and writer in contemporary spirituality and religion.