

Teenagers, social media and loneliness: the inside story

In this talk I will be aiming to look at the manifestation of loneliness in adolescents, some of the roots of this and how we might think about supporting them. This will involve examining the world in which they live, including the internet and social media, and how this has affected individual and family relationships. I will speak about what I find is the antidote to loneliness in meeting with adolescent clients and some clues from a relational standpoint on how to help them to make meaningful and secure connections. I will also suggest some ideas about how to understand and engage with the adolescents in our families and those we meet in the school, consulting room, clinic or hospital.

Adolescence does not seem to be what it was – there is far greater independence and agency than in previous decades and adolescents have far more means of staying connected than previous generations.

However, in an international research sample (from the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment survey) of one million 15-16 yrs. olds, school loneliness increased between 2012 and 2018 in 36 out of 37 countries around the world. School loneliness – feeling you don't fit in, or belong, being a reliable predictor of more general lonely feelings. Nearly twice as many adolescents displayed high levels of loneliness in 2018 compared to 2012, an increase similar to that previously identified in **clinical-level depression** in the U.S. and UK.

It is an understandable conclusion to think that something very alarming is going on for the mental health of our young people.

I am going to consider some of other aspects of why loneliness is such a problem from a psychotherapist's view.

We now know that the emotions and thinking of adolescents is largely steered by neurophysiological processes in the brain. The reasoning and logic of the frontal lobes is not fully in operation, and many decisions are driven by the more intense and emotional functions of the amygdala. It is not simply the effect of "hormones" as our parent's generation might have said. Despite this, parents often still look for the immediate causes for difficulties and more serious mental health problems are explained away or dismissed. We live in a culture that wants to locate and repair difficulties as soon as possible. Parents say to me – "oh he just needs to stop being so silly. There's nothing to worry about" or "he is just tired, and needs a holiday" or "she should have got over that by now' Through these statements unfortunately comes an increased distance between parents and teenagers, where parents seem to have lost confidence in themselves and

can't engage in a more in-depth approach of listening and talking. Then the decision is made to "leave them alone" or "just give them space".

As one mother said to me recently of her 14 year old daughter: "I'm so afraid to say the wrong thing" and "she doesn't listen to me anyway". Parents can feel fearful of losing connection with the child, and are left with a feeling of impotence.

And so, in this context adolescents turn to friends to share experiences, check and match their own behaviours, and gain support through the group.

Unfortunately, the recent isolations of the pandemic and lockdowns at home, despite children being in closer proximity to parents, seem in many cases to have made relationships worse. Teenagers were really suffering at the loss of in-person contact with individual friends or the wider community of young people. The natural developmental step of developing a life away from parents was curtailed, no chance for exploring new experiences – even risky ones and the frustrations about this clashed with the parental stress and worry of working from home, lost jobs and increased partner relationship tensions. This left young people feeling overlooked and isolated. We in adolescent mental health have seen a huge leap in the numbers of young people struggling with anxiety, depression and eating disorders.

In these times, we observe that young people largely enact their friendships through social media and the communications and contacts of the internet. So why did this not fully support them through the pandemic? The problem in my view is that these methods of connection do not facilitate the kind of relationship that is needed.

A 2018 national survey in the US, by the Hopelab and Well Being Trust found that 93% of youth aged 14-22 use social media, most on a daily basis. While this high level of use persisted during the pandemic, interestingly the adolescents' enjoyment of social media dropped. In 2019, 41% of teens said they enjoyed social media "a lot"; in 2021 that figure declined to 34%.

In his book "The Meanings of Persons" ('Le personnage et la personne'), on the chapter "The Person" subheading "The dialogue", No 7, p.131 (SCM Press version 1957), Paul Tournier laments the situation in 1957 which seems remarkably similar to 2022 :

"Think of the haste and superficiality of modern life, radio programmes flitting from one triviality to another".

"One can chat endlessly, be a ...collector of all sorts of impressions, react like an automaton to every sentiment, without ever really encountering another person".

In the same book, I find it helpful that Tournier distinguishes between the concept of the personage – the appearance of who we are - and the person.

The personage is: "The external appearance which touches the personage of others from outside".

This is perfectly exemplified by the online use of the "profile picture" or the carefully engineered "selfie". It's my experience that young people eagerly refine and control their online "personage" to avoid social shame, and the revealing of their true selves – with insecurities, self-doubt and fears about being accepted. Sometimes online pictures are a cry for the approval they seek. And I would include the sending of naked images to each other as part of this. One very troubled 14 year old girl whom I met, was tangled in a web of sexual acting out, rumour, and unstable friendships which seemed borne out of a very insecure relationship with parents. She spent hours alone in her room while they worked elsewhere. She told me that the main present she hoped for on her birthday was

a wasp-waisted corset ('guêpière') which she planned to wear for her online photos to appear dramatically thin, older than her age and sexually appealing. It seemed she was pining for something to "hold her together" but which in fact tied her up.

In normal times, when meeting up, chatting and spending time together, positive friendships outside the family do give pre-teens and teenagers a sense of belonging, confidence and being accepted.

But there are several ways in which this can go wrong and lead to isolated states and loneliness. Firstly, the young person simply might not have the skills to make and keep friends. This involves quite sophisticated abilities to gauge nuanced comments, read body language and practice empathy for the other. I see increasing numbers of young people now with various levels of neurodiverse temperaments and related personalities. They really want friends and look for someone who can match their interests and offer stimulating company, but this can be very difficult and can result in a sad loneliness.

Thirteen year old, Ben had just joined a new school when his parents returned to the UK after military service abroad. Teachers were alarmed in the first week or so, as they saw Ben sobbing uncontrollably and hyperventilating- inconsolable about the loss of previous friends and his former home. He said: "I am so lonely. There is no one here who is like me". They discovered that he had been googling subjects like: "How long do I need to feel sad, for it to be depression?" As I spoke with him it became clear that he had a way of thinking that was rather black and white, (often described as "catastrophic") so that he could not envision anything ever getting better. The international school he had come from was idealised, his friend there had understood him perfectly and he talked endlessly about wishing he was back there. He was a relatively quiet and intellectual boy whose interests were in coding and IT systems, gaming online and the details of his father's military work. He just could not manage the lively joking and boisterous behaviour of his new classmates - describing it as baffling and immature. He found it hard to tell if someone's comment was very insulting or just inviting him to play. And he was a person who found transitions very difficult.

The approach that worked was a combination of calming his anxiety state and steadily getting him to think, taking a more realistic view of how things had been and concretely working on what people meant when they said things now. Ben tentatively began to explore activities where he might meet similar people, and began to see that he could cope with change and even take risks in forming friendships.

I have to comment that I see more and more children with these kind of difficulties at a much younger age 6 – 12 years, where the skills of friend-making are developed, but this is a question for a different discussion.

Sometimes, the friends chosen are not suited to the young person, or not helpful – often chosen because they seem exciting and risky or popular, but who don't show real care for anyone trying to be friends with them. Perceived "popularity" is very common and an automatic route to exclusion and feelings of inadequacy. The teenager tries to fit in, but feels they are not succeeding and may even be actively ignored or rejected. I recall one girl, fifteen year old, Celine who, although attractive and intelligent, worried about whether her friends really liked her, and as an introvert, was exhausted by the efforts to maintain a lively bubbly "personage". A perfectionist by nature, she then found a solution to this by dramatically restricting her eating and losing weight. Celine also

struggled with the pandemic isolation where she could not properly measure how well she was doing in class, or what friends really thought of her.

Suddenly by getting thinner she was in control and felt she could be admired and accepted. Unfortunately for her plan, the weight loss was noticed by her mother who took her directly to the doctor, and a weight recovery programme was introduced. But Celine was silently furious about this, and extreme anxiety and panic attacks ensued. Only after many months of therapy could she accept that her panic attacks, bouts of crying etc. had been explosive ways to say how angry and desperate she was. Trapped with hidden fears of not coming top in schoolwork, or in her social circle, she had tried to force herself into a way of behaving that was not true to herself. She needed help to be the quieter, thoughtful person who could accept compromise, and to identify real friends who liked her for who she was.

In considering these relational situations we need to note that young people largely enact their friendships through social media and the communications and contacts of the internet. This can result in a teenager not being able to accurately assess (as during the covid lockdowns) whether they are really loved and approved of by others. I believe that social media does not *create* loneliness, but it can act as a powerful magnifying glass which highlights conflicts and problems already existing.

Social media and being alone

So adolescent life is almost entirely lived through their online and phone contact with others – some people known locally to them and also through the lives of admired celebrities, influencers, and those commenting and sharing their thoughts through Instagram, You Tube and Tik Tok, etc. By the way, no-one uses Facebook, or Twitter – that’s for the oldies!

Yes, there are those young people who play sports, volunteer in the community, belong to religious youth groups, do art, music and drama but even here, all of these adolescents will likely also share those experiences via their social media channels – often to demonstrate how successful they are, how much fun they are having which is the cause of something called “social comparison stress”.

The needs and vulnerabilities of a teenager make this arena a highly risky place when they are looking for affirmation. The very place where they seek reassurance, can be the place where existing fears and self-doubts are intensified, or perhaps even activated in the first place.

Teenagers want to connect with each other and be affirmed but also believe that online activities will mean they never have to be bored or lonely ever again.

Young people seem to be afraid of, or baffled by, what may come in the periods of quiet – solitude we might call it. For them it is a “lull” a time when there seems to be no-one there and nothing is happening.

You will notice in this picture, that no young person has a phone on them...

But there is a problem with this way of dealing with being alone. Sherry Turkle, Professor of Social Studies of Science and technology at MIT says this:

“We slip into thinking that always being connected is going to make us less lonely. But we are at risk because it is actually the reverse: if we are unable to be alone, we will be more lonely.

... Yet these days, so many people – adults and children – become anxious without a constant feed of online stimulation.”

In ordinary conversation a quiet moment or when people fall silent together becomes a creative moment and a true connection, as Dr Turkle says:

A “lull” then may be on its way to becoming something else... there is no way to know when things will pick up, except to stay with the conversation.”

Her book, which I highly recommend, is called “Reclaiming Conversations: the Power of Talk in a Digital Age” (or in French, “les yeux dans les yeux: le pouvoir de la conversation à l’heure du numérique”).

Often young people tell me that they have a problem of “over thinking” lying alone in bed at night going over and over what has happened in the day – criticising themselves for stupid comments they made or regretting things they had done, wondering if what they had done had caused lost friendships, or a drop in social standing. A 13 years old told me recently that if she doesn’t distract herself away from these thoughts, using breathing techniques, or self-calming apps, she becomes quickly overwhelmed and depressed. I asked her if it might be possible, rather than avoiding them, to take a look at these negative thoughts but in a slow and manageable way.

Thinking about things.

This is the job of the psychotherapist and in fact, the job of all adults caring for adolescents... What then must I try to do?

First of all – show a model of relationship which involves (mostly) sitting in the same room trying to listen and understand. Sometimes this involves some thoughtful guessing!

I have to be prepared to get it wrong and try again.

I have to notice and think about ways the teenager is making me feel – and understand that as their way of communicating something without words. And if this feels negative, critical or frustrating – I must respond without retaliating.

I have to try, through the relationship, to spark a reflective capacity that is safe, rather than being that terrifying place of self-criticism and regret.

Story of Elena

Elena, a 15 years old from Greece, who came to see me because of difficulties in settling into her British boarding school. She was getting into trouble repeatedly and seemed unhappy but was expressing it through acting out – breaking school rules, wearing too much jewellery and makeup, and had a vaping habit. Teachers saw her as badly behaved and in need of discipline. Elena absolutely loved her smart phone, checked it during sessions with me and could hardly bear to be away from it. On one occasion it was confiscated as a sanction and she told me how unbearable this had been, as she cuddled it against her body, saying “it’s my baby”. It reminded me of the book by Philip Pullman “Northern Lights” which is set in a parallel world to ours where children’s souls are visible manifestations which take the form of an animal – a bird, a squirrel, a cat known as a “daemon”.

The child talks to their daemon, can think things through with them, (As a child your “daemon” can change shape, but settles into one animal form as the person becomes an adult.) The story tells of a plot by powerful adult authorities to literally cut children’s daemons away from them, so they will never know the sin of adulthood, but also releasing an energy for the authorities to harness. At that point when Elena’s phone had been taken away from her as a sanction, she seemed desolate and lost, like a child in the story – severed from her soul-daemon. Elena’s parents were busy back in Greece, her father a top jeweller, making custom pieces in gold and precious stones for celebrities, her mother helping to plan and design. Elena once said her ambition as an adult was “to do nothing” like her mother. When I challenged this, saying surely her mum did work, she replied, “No, she really does *nothing*. Has lunch with her friends, goes shopping” It all seemed a bit empty.

Elena seemed to have very little capacity to reflect, or think that she might have an inner life which could sustain her in the challenges of living away from family.

During the pandemic lockdown, she went back to her family home, but seemed to deteriorate. I kept in contact with her via Zoom, but noticed that she was becoming more and more withdrawn, possibly depressed, at one point keeping her camera switched off entirely because, she said, "I look so awful; my hair is terrible". It was at this point that she had to face her loneliness. No school friends to impress, no Greek friends to go out and party with, no place to get her nails done. At this time, because I was obliged to talk to the blank video page, I realised that her "profile photo" set on the facing page was Elena aged about 3 years old, in a white dress and earrings. She was making me talk to her baby self. She then spoke about how she was the apple of her parents' eye, laughing as she remembered this and felt nostalgic for that time. Perhaps it felt that I could become the person who saw the little child, her vulnerability and how beloved she had been, and perhaps still could be. I kept in contact with her and listened to how she felt, and accepted without judgement her despair about her social losses and disappearing identity. Gradually she turned her camera back on, and allowed me to see the dark room, with the closed curtains where she spent most of her time. Her parents, especially mother, tried to communicate with her, but found it very difficult and was frequently rejected by Elena. She spoke fondly of her father, for whom she was still the treasured three years old, but who could not understand his daughter's troubled feelings. After all, he had given her so much! Why did she not feel happy? Her worries about being "the bad girl" at school, and no way to find a solution sent her into a self-critical depression. She was also frustrated at her "personage" and her whole social world being spoiled and snatched away by the pandemic.

So we carried on speaking, although she would sometimes not turn up to online appointments, which left me feeling rather unwanted and alone. She began to see how annoyed she was about not being in control, and how this drive for perfection – the immaculate celebrity looks, clever social media chat and gossip etc. were in fact huge distractions from what she really wanted in life. The turning point was when she told me she had been doing some art for school, and permitted me to see some of her drawings and sketches. Here at last was something real that Elena could do – perhaps a talent inherited from her designer mum and making a link with her. (It was interesting thinking back that one of her "bad behaviours" was wearing too much jewellery) I was relieved that she was able to slowly build self-esteem, and trust in her own real abilities which carried her through the remainder of the lockdown. Back at school, Elena decided to cease the rebellion, focus on her exams, and get good grades in her art, design and fashion, which would enable her to make a move to a different school for her final two years, a school which would lead more directly to Art College.

When looking at this we can see how easy it is for the young person to confuse being alone, with loneliness. Eventually, and perhaps with the support given, Elena could experience how solitude was ok, could release creativity and provide ideas about how she could move forward.

The importance of early relationship

Thinking of Elena's presentation of herself as a three year old made me think of the importance of those early days of childhood when the parents focus on the baby and begin.

My own father, Graham Melville-Thomas a child psychiatrist, and keen UK member of Médecine de la Personne, was endlessly fascinated by the interaction between mother and baby which formed the basis of the child's bond with parents, with other people and the outside world. He observed and made videos about how mothers and babies keep contact through mutual gaze, and by

mirroring each other's movements. In this way the tiny infant is literally looked upon as if they are a small person. As Donald Winnicott said, relationship begins when a person is "seen into existence". I think my father would also see this echoed in many passages in the Bible, perhaps particularly in the Psalms, like number 139, where the intimate thoughts of the writer are expressed to the person of God, who seems to be the attentive parent watching the growth of the small person from the very start. (Photo slide 14)

I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made;
Marvellous are Your works,
And *that* my soul knows very well.
My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skilfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.
Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.
And in Your book they all were written,
The days fashioned for me,
When as yet there were none of them.

I think this could represent the recognition of the person by the parent – the baby is named, loved and seen as a person, and a whole future imagined for them. This can start even before the child is born, "the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them" So the sense of being *with* someone, of not being alone or lonely is instilled in the baby who delightedly reciprocates the smiles gestures and sounds of the mother and father.

Later the child will learn that she is *with* people but also separate, and that this is not a threat, because there develops an internal dialogue. You might see a two-year-old concentrating hard on climbing stairs, and if she falls, she says out loud "Up you get". So, the encouraging voice of the parent has become part of them. From here the child gradually internalises the voice, so it becomes an unspoken good presence in their mind.

Julian of Norwich, the English contemplative mystic of the 14th century wrote this about her experience of God: (slide photo 15)

"I saw that [our Lord] is to us everything which is good and comforting for our help. He is our clothing, who wraps and enfolds us for love, embraces us and shelters us, surrounds us for his love, which is so tender that he may never desert us. And so, in this sight I saw that he is everything which is good, as I understand."

So both Julian, and the small child, know firstly that she is not alone, and secondly that there can be a reflective dialogue in her own mind – which we call thinking. She can consider, and contemplate, be comforted and hold dialogue within herself – very like the close animal soul of Philip Pullman's books, the daemon-self who loves you and gives wise advice and persuades you back from danger.

I would suggest that for some teenagers, for all sorts of reasons, the inner encouraging voice has been lost and they aren't so sure if someone is "with them". This often happens in cases of divorce and separation when the adult hurts and conflicts are so intense that the child's experience is overlooked. This can even happen where parents ask for practical help in explaining the situation to their children, becoming obsessed with contact arrangements and the like.

Thus, one can feel lonely even within the family, and as we discussed, the teenager then turns to the ‘family’ of the internet which seems to offer moment by moment attention – just like the parent and the small baby. I had hoped to illustrate this in the story of Elena.

Parents

When I meet with parents of adolescents who seem to be having problems, I usually ask them to tell me about what he was like as a little person (and I use those words). Then most times there is a flood of recovered feeling and affection for the child who seems so hostile and withdrawn now. As the parent revives memories of the young child, they are also reviving their belief that the child, no matter how they appear now, once had liveliness and a presence, and perhaps also sensitivities, which they have lost sight of in the disappointments and conflicts of adolescence.

We can also help parents to stay in touch with their adolescents by considering their own level of busy priorities. Even in their young children they can make the mistake of seeing them as “independent” rather than lonely or isolated. A parent might say “They don’t notice when I’m on my laptop, because they are engrossed in the TV”. It cannot be underestimated how much the child and the teenager need to be “seen” in an ongoing way, (and also heard), in order to keep that internal loving and protective voice alive. This is not clutching them to ourselves, fearful of the dangers of separation, or the perils of the outside world. Rather it is offering a light touch of care and being available in a way which offers ground for the good and necessary flight away from the family. Being mentally present, so they learn how to “be alone in the presence of another” as Winnicott writes. In this way we can also support their “capacity to be bored” (that is not troubled by it as in the fear of silence, or lack of internet connection) because there is an awareness of being held in mind by someone.

In our current society we parents have to acknowledge our own screen use which can result in mixed messages being given to children.” You are on your phone too much!” applies to both child and adult. It is not uncommon for a family to be in the same house, or even at the same mealtime, with each member absorbed in phone activity.

Sherry Turkle again writes:

“We see the new silences of family life. Children learn that no matter what they do, they will *not* win adults away from technology”. (My italics)

So, let’s encourage putting away the screen, and try different ways to learn about our teenagers – of course this might mean entering the world of *their* screens sitting beside them as they play an online game, asking how an app works or simply talking on a car journey, when communing is easier side by side.

In consulting rooms

Can any of this be applied to the role of professionals in the consulting room, the medical staff in particular? About 20 years ago, I spent just under a decade working in paediatric psychology work, and have recently returned to support a paediatric surgeon friend, who treats children with colorectal difficulties.

The simplest issue we could observe is how screen note taking has altered some of the experience of the patient. So, it’s important to minimise the amount of time turned away from the young person and towards the computer. I see that my surgeon friend actively apologises for this if she has

to look something up saying” I’m sorry I have to look at the PC now, but I just have to see what Dr So and So says.”

Another point is never to underestimate the vulnerability of the adolescent even when they seem bright, confident and self-possessed, as well as silent or dismissively hostile. So much is hidden in the adolescent with health issues.

Once in working with the issue of supporting adolescents from paediatric to adult services in endocrinology, I was sitting in a work group. A doctor seated next to me asked:

“How do you talk to teenagers? To be honest I just want them to *like* me – but it’s so hard.”

All medical or mental health professionals want to offer an accessible and sympathetic presence to their young patients. But I think it’s helpful to start by imagining what kind of state of mind *they* may arrive with. Very often in my experience this is one of uncertainty and even foreboding about what may be “done” to them and what new information from the doctor or nurse may prove to be frightening or humiliating. It may not be so easy to put their minds at rest, as we would hope to.

So the starting point is not *our* knowledge or experience, but the perspective of the young person. Of course, it is fine to do kind introductions and to explain as far as you can what might happen in the meeting (I have to tell the children I see in the hospital that I am not someone who does examinations or injections!). One idea might be to ask what they think they are coming for, from their point of view. One could say “I’m just asking to understand if we got the message right” or “I wonder how much of our last meeting made sense to you?”

In the colo-rectal clinic it becomes apparent that the young person often arrives with a suppressed despair about their chronic condition and how it isolates them, and then with an intense wish that the doctor can “fix” everything very quickly. It is then the team’s job to see the teenager through the realities, their disappointment and come to terms with what is possible. In my recent experience, the young person often has an immediate feeling of embarrassment, perhaps answering “I don’t know” to all questions, thereby showing ongoing frustration which they can’t quite express.

If the young person is very reserved, perhaps the parent can be asked to share how they explained it to them. Sometimes this reveals useful misunderstandings by both parent and adolescent about the nature of the visit, or even how little the child has been told.

I know that many physicians, surgeons and nurses are well able to acknowledge these feelings, saying “I’m sure this is very disappointing. “Or “I know this has been a long journey for you.” And then allowing a bit of quiet, before rushing in with a possible solution, a “fix it” offering.

(Although I do appreciate that slowing the pace, and allowing pauses is a luxury not always feasible with the pressure of short appointment times!).

And I don’t think you have to be *liked* by the teenager (as with my endocrinology colleague) but show that you guess complex feelings are there, before presenting the medical next steps.

As I mentioned in my earlier comments on meeting adolescents, I would repeat that it’s interesting to *notice and inwardly think* about the feelings that they engender in us – do we feel irritated or confused, a little stupid or useless. These are important communications to us of how they feel. Projecting feelings is something teenagers are masters at! And it’s then important not to retaliate, for example by becoming brisk in our tone, or overly knowledgeable to make up for that “useless” feeling. I recall one Professor of Endocrinology faced with telling a teenager some difficult results, launching into an explanation of the use of fruit flies in genetic research. I remember being in the

room, feeling slightly disconnected (what is he talking about?!) as I'm sure the young person would have been. I did also feel sympathy for the doctor who was clearly uncomfortable with how the young person might respond to the bad news.

Speaking to adolescents about Loneliness

I once had to give a talk in the school assembly on the subject of Loneliness, where the reading was (again) from the Psalms. This time it was Psalm 25

“Turn to me and be gracious to me for I am lonely and afflicted”.

I doubt if many of the 13 to 18 year olds would consider faith, and trust in God as an answer to their troubles, but I hoped to show them a link between security and loneliness by talking to them about the Science fiction film “Gravity” (2013 In this the main character is lost in space after a series of disasters. On a spacewalk, her one good friend and colleague sacrifices himself to save her, spinning off into the dark to his inevitable death. She feels utterly alone and hopeless, and plans to commit suicide. But in the story, he then mystically reappears to give her advice and encouragement which eventually leads to her survival. Was he real? Was it a spirit or just her imagination? I said to the pupils:

“Well, you don't need to be floating in space to feel as lonely and lost as that...

It can happen amongst loads of other people... at a party where everyone seems to know everyone else... in a new situation, where once the first welcomes fade away, other people don't seem to notice you... sometimes, even in a family setting where you think “They just don't GET me !”

But I went on to say that having a good warm sense inside of *someone* who cares for you, can make all the difference, and give some hope when everything seems bleak. It might be the reassuring thought of mother or father, of a grandparent, an aunt who you are close to or a best friend, it might be your faith in the creator of the universe, God, or the living presence in the person of Jesus Christ.

I hope that in working to grow a reflective capacity in our young people that they may also be able to also develop a spiritual life – opening beyond, and yet within everyday life.

Is there a positive aspect of being on your own?

Like in the film, that calm feeling of someone being connected to you, is what enables us to actually enjoy being alone – then we call it Solitude. That's when you are lost in a book, walking alone through a forest, listening to music by yourself. That's the good kind of being alone, when inside there's a feeling that most things are fine, and you can have a good think about everything. Solitude is often where the ideas come from, where you get creative, find out what you really want, and who you really are...

Solitude is chosen, loneliness is not.

Let us help our young people to feel secure inside, so that they can enjoy all that both company and solitude has to offer.

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