

Living Well While Being Single

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Being single changes the tenor of your relationships with others. It gives you the time to be more sensitive and aware of the impact of your interactions with others. It can positively affect the quality of both your work and your play. And if you decide to partner again, it can help you to do so with an enhanced self-knowledge of who you are and what works for you in a relationship - which is basic to being able to give and receive love and respect. However, becoming single can also be a bit of an adjustment.

One of the reasons people sometimes fear being single is that they confuse being alone with being lonely. To be lonely is to lack something - it is a desolate feeling that usually lasts for a few seconds to a few minutes at a time, and that is often tied to a mood. When one feels lonely in a relationship, the feeling can be more painful than any loneliness that can be experienced while being alone.

Being alone simply means being with your self. And since your self is the only person in this life that you will really actually know, the only person you can hope to please or can hope to exert some control over, to why not enjoy the person that you are? However, just as it takes work to get the most out of being partnered, being a good partner for one's self is much more enjoyable if you make an effort. Below are some thoughts and observations I have about the kind of self-effort that can make being alone a rewarding experience:

1) Have a good support system, and especially include single friends. If you need to develop a better support system, here is a way to get started. Create a list of people you would like to get to know better. Contemplate what you can offer them. It could be a phone call, an idea, walk in the park or a movie - it doesn't matter really, the important thing is that you are offering to give of yourself. Even if the other person does not accept, letting them know that you value them is a good action that ultimately will strengthen you.

2) With regards to your work, if you don't like what you do, now is the time to explore something new. Focus on your career - and on making enough money. If you are alone and get sick or have an accident and cannot afford to take care of yourself, not only will you suffer in body but in mind. On the other hand, watch out for becoming obsessed with your work. Compulsive work habits can be a deceptive way of avoiding things you need to deal with. They can be even more unhealthy than being under-employed.

3) Yes, you have intimacy needs and what are they? Are they being met? Do you like being touched in body, mind and/or spirit? Most people need some form of these of these styles of intimacy to really enjoy life. Let go of your pre-conceptions of what is good or bad and listen to your inner voice. If something, or someone, doesn't work out, give yourself credit for trying and move on. Be patient. You may not get everything you want on your timetable but if you are thinking about it, it's out there.

4) Take really good care of your physical body. Eat well, exercise and get enough sleep. If it

has been more than a year, go to the doctor and get a checkup. Treat your body like you would a beloved child's. After all, it is the vehicle that keeps you in this world. Avoid becoming habituated to anything. When alone, no one else may be there to notice that you have slid into a bad habit. It can be easy to hide bad choices from our selves when there is a temporary pay off.

5) Stay out of the dark corners of your mind where enemies such as doubt, anger, resentments and shame might live. Focusing on negative feelings or past bad experiences can create negative chemical reactions in your body that can make you sick. The past is dead, and the future is but a dream. If you can't stop ruminating or your problems simply feel overwhelming, talk to someone about them. If you don't have someone you intuitively feel would be good to talk to, find a therapist, clergy person or other professional listener.

6) Be gentle with yourself. Many people believe that in order to change they have to scold, push and/or punish themselves. This harshness, even if it sometimes gets you to do something, is so depleting to our central nervous systems that it is almost never worth it! Instead of beating yourself up, do something really nice for yourself. Or, even more effectively, simply decide to think well of yourself. Thinking well of yourself is not only good for you but it is also good for those around you.

Being gentle with yourself is so important, that I would like to offer you my own definition of self-gentleness in closing:

To be gentle with myself is to be kind, considerate and encouraging of my very own self. It is to love myself in the way that I have always wanted and deserved to be loved. And when I live in this space of love, I then become the kind of person I want to find in the world.

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