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Alone vs. Lonely

There are many folks that are quarantined in isolation without other people or pets during this time of COVID-19. Some are used to being by themselves, others may find it uncomfortable or even unbearable, and others may have a combination of feelings. If being by yourself is difficult, this is a good time to practice being alone, but not lonely.

Alone is being in your own company. Lonely is longing for someone or something other than yourself to spend time with. In my practice I have found so many people who are wonderful caregivers of others, but not so good at self-care. They pour time, energy, and love into other people, but neglect themselves. Often, they have done this since they were children and there are many reasons why this happens (which I will not go into now). My point is, if you know how to give to others, now is a great time to turn that energy inward.

There is a wonderful book that I often recommend called, How to Be Your Own Best Friend (1971) by Newman, Berkowitz & Owen. In this short and powerful read is the essence of self-empowerment and the true key to happiness. Learning to love and accept and pour time and energy into yourself enriches your life immeasurably. Whether your belief system is a spiritual one or a secular one, the process of self-love and self-care is not selfish. It is a gift that we can all have.

If treating yourself with loving kindness seems too difficult because of the negativity that has built up inside (which I will not go into now), then removing the obstacles to being good to yourself must happen first. One of the best books that I know to accomplish this goal is Kristen Neff's Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself (2011).

Finally, if doing this by yourself feels impossible, seek help. Even if you are by yourself right now, therapy is available through telehealth and/or hotlines if you need to talk. We are providing service as much as possible at CCC and have a list of some local resources to turn to. You don't have to be lonely. Give to yourself and reach out when you need to. We care about your welfare. Stay safe.

Yours truly,
Barbara/Dr. Brown