

"Language has created the word "loneliness" to express the pain of being alone. And it has created the word "solitude" to express the glory of being alone."

- Paul Johannes Tillich

This quote couldn't be more perfect. There truly is a difference between loneliness and solitude. One is a blessing and the other can certainly be a curse. People often stay in unhappy relationships because they don't want to be alone. But I've said for many years that I'd rather be alone than wish I were. When I need some solitude, my mind tells me it's time. When it speaks to me like that, I know to listen. It means I need to clear my head and get centered again. I find my peace and solitude in two places: the mountains and the beach. We each should have our own place to do that. Think about what your special place is and then go to it. All of us, even the most extroverted, sometimes need solitude. As an introvert, I need it much more than my extroverted friends. It's how I recharge my battery. Since summer is a time when people finally take vacations to enjoy time with loved ones, it seemed like the perfect time to talk about this very important topic. If you need some assistance learning to enjoy solitude without being lonely, contact me and I'll help you.

Yours in health,



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Take Care of Yourself



I truly think most of us women (and some men) need real moments of self-reflection and solitude to truly balance out how much of ourselves we give away. If you're a single parent, this is especially important because you truly never get a break and you're always giving something to someone. There is no ex-partner around to take the kids on a regular schedule. It's all you. So you must take or make opportunities for yourself. You'll be happy to know I took my own advice.

While my son was away at a basketball camp for five days, I packed my bags and headed to a resort in the mountains of Pennsylvania (thank you Deborah) to get pampered and spend time in complete solitude. For some reason, I felt called to go to that particular place. After I got there, I found out why. Perhaps because I took the "expert" hiking trail, over the two days and more than six hours I spent hiking, I saw a total of just three people. The weather was perfect, the scenery was beautiful, the air was clean and the only sounds were those of Mother Nature. For me, it was a little slice of heaven. Life is crazy and we all have our own special way to get centered. My way happens to be in nature. The following weekend, I headed to the beach with my son. And even though I wasn't alone, I was still able to find solitude as I walked on the beach in the morning while he slept. The sound and sight of the waves crashing onto the shore also give me peace. All the while, I was

hoping to see a dolphin, but was rewarded with a school of them. They too give me peace and for some reason, help me feel more connected to my father.

Life is busy. But we must remember that one of the most important things we can do is take care of ourselves. In the hustle and bustle of our day-to-day existence, we often forget to do that. We're too busy running our kids around, working late hours or meeting a friend for a drink or a meal to really focus on us. When we travel by plane, the flight attendant always tells passengers, "In the event of an emergency, place the oxygen mask on yourself before helping someone else." That's excellent advice. If we don't take care of ourselves, we're not going to be very good at (or have the energy for) taking care of anyone else.

Here are just a few things I think will help you take care of yourself:

Unplug: Pretty much all of us are completely tied to some form of electronics. At least once a day, turn it off for an hour or two or leave it in another part of the house. There really isn't much that can't wait an hour. Get away from it, even for just a little while. Enjoy the solitude and feel the relief of stress leaving your body because you're not worried about that next email, text or call.

Lights out: Even if it's only once a week, go to bed early, turn off the TV, put down the book and turn out the lights. Lie in bed quietly and reflect on all the things for which you're grateful before going to sleep. An extra hour of sleep can do wonders. Shoot for at least seven hours and you'll be surprised by how good you feel.

Get a massage: Massages are not only good for you physically, but they do wonders for you mentally. They can help soothe sore muscles, relieve anxiety and depression, boost the immune system and help counterbalance all the sitting we do every day. I treat myself to a 90 minute massage monthly. It's a time just for me when absolutely no one can bother me and I can just relax and enjoy my solitude.

Call a trusted friend: Many of us keep things bottled up inside and it's just not healthy. We need to let it out or the stress can start to impact us physically. Getting things off your chest can be more healing than you can imagine. By talking it out, your friend may even help you realize that what you're going through is not as bad as you think. If it is, the friend can help you work through it. You know what they say, "Two heads are better than one." Communication is a beautiful thing. Make that call.

Cry: Tears are healing. They're really a way for your body to release emotions like sadness, grief, anger and frustration. I'm always very grateful when I can cry. It feels cleansing. If you're a man, don't be ashamed or afraid to shed a few tears. I've always said that it takes a really strong man to be willing to cry. I personally think that if more men cried, they'd be less susceptible to the physical ailments (like high blood pressure) that seem to haunt them more so than women. Here's an interesting fact: Biochemist and "tear expert" Dr. William Frey at the Ramsey Medical Center in Minneapolis discovered that emotional tears contain stress hormones that get expelled from the body through crying. After studying the composition of tears, he found that emotional tears shed stress hormones and other toxins, which accumulate in our bodies. This is a really good thing. Personally, I don't like to cry in front of other people, but I've found that when I have, those who were there were quick to offer comfort.

So I guess the bottom line is this: Take care of you and I truly think it starts with some solitude. You can either be lonely or you can find glory in being alone. I'm choosing glory. What's your choice? I'll close with a quote from Maya Angelou. *"Solitude can be a much-to-be-desired condition. In silence, we listen to ourselves, and in the quietude, we may even hear the voice of God."*

Have a wonderful month.