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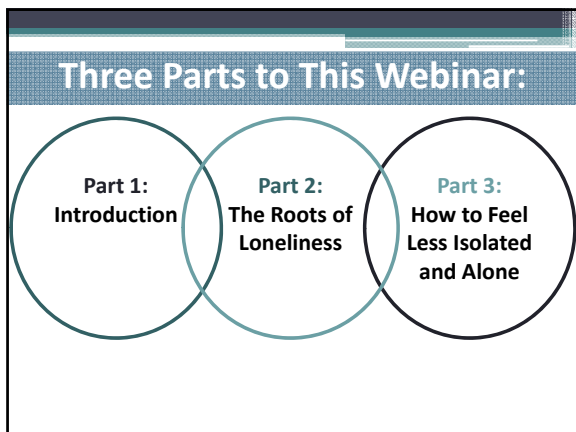
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### Feel lonely? You're not alone

A recent U.K. study of millions of people found that one in 10 people didn't feel they had a close friend, while one in five never or rarely felt loved. A loneliness survey, conducted by AARP, showed that more than 42 million U.S. adults over age 45 suffer from chronic loneliness.

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## Part 1

## Introduction

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### Definition of Loneliness

**LONELINESS**

The distress that results from discrepancies between ideal and perceived social relationships

Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10677643>

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### Definition of Loneliness

- Complex set of feelings encompassing reactions to unfulfilled intimate and social needs
- Transient for some individuals but can be a chronic state for others
- Major risk factor for psychological disturbances and for broad-based morbidity and mortality

Source: <http://psychology.uchicago.edu/people/faculty/cacioppo/jtcreprints/hc09.pdf>

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### Satisfying Social Relationships Vs. Chronic Loneliness

- More positive outlooks on life
- More secure attachments
- More interaction with others
- More autonomic activation when facing psychological challenges
- More efficient restorative behaviors
- Lower cortisol levels throughout a day

Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10677643>

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### Physical and Mental Health Consequences of Loneliness

"Perceptions of social isolation, or loneliness, increase vigilance for threat and heighten feelings of vulnerability while also raising the desire to reconnect."

**Mental Effects:**

- Focus on exclusion instead of inclusion
- Timidity
- Misremembering

**Physical Effects:**

- Diminished sleep quality
- Increased morbidity and mortality
- Weakened health

Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20652462>

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## Loneliness and Health

- Both perceived and actual social isolation are associated with increased risk of early mortality.
- Studies have found links between perceived loneliness and heart disease.
- Research has suggested that loneliness and social isolation may be a greater threat to public health in the United States than obesity.
- When we feel socially included, both our physical and mental health improve. Feeling lonely can be temporary in cases like moving away from home or traveling on your own.

Sources: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1745691614568352>  
<http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/abs/10.1089/ars.2017.7312>  
<http://www.newswise.com/articles/so-lonely-i-could-die>

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## The Lonely Brain

- Structurally and biochemically different
- Suppressed neural response to positive images and events
- Less activity when attempting "mentalization"

Source: <http://psycnet.apa.org/?fa=main.doiLanding&doi=10.1037/a0037618>

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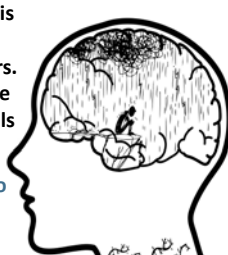
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## Causes of Loneliness

"Loneliness is about 50% heritable, but this does not mean loneliness is determined by genes. An equal amount is due to situational factors. What appears to be heritable is the intensity of pain felt when one feels socially isolated."

- John Cacioppo




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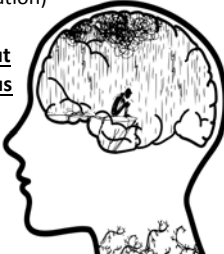
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### Causes of Loneliness

- Heredity
- Environment (isolation, new location)
- Circumstances (divorce, loss)
- **The way we think and feel about ourselves and the world around us**



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**LONELINESS IS NOT SIMPLY  
BEING ALONE**

**IT IS A FILTER OF SEEING  
OURSELVES AS ALONE**



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## Part 2

## The Roots of Loneliness

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## Psychological Defenses

Individuals build psychological defenses to adapt to their early environment that can hurt or limit them in their current lives. These defenses can lead to feelings of alienation, isolation, and depression.




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## Two Core Defenses that Contribute to Loneliness



The Fantasy Bond      Critical Inner Voice

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## The Fantasy Bond

**The Fantasy Bond** (core defense) is a self-parenting process made up of two elements: the helpless, needy child, and the self-punishing, self-nurturing parent. We maintain the negative self-image we formed in childhood. The degree of defense is proportional to the amount of damage sustained while growing up.




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### Severely lonely adults often report:

- History of abuse
- Hostile/intrusive or withdrawn/misattuned parents
- Disorganized or anxious ambivalent attachment style and problems with communication
- Internalization of parent/ attachment figures
- Feelings of hostility or helplessness



Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25782760>

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### The Effect of Thoughts



**"The way in which people construe their self in relation to others around them has powerful effects on their self concept and, possibly, on their physiology."**

Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10677643>

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### The Relationship Between Thoughts, Feelings, and Behavior

**How a person is thinking is predictive of how he or she is likely to behave.**




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**"Lonely individuals are more likely to construe their world as threatening, hold more negative expectations, and interpret and respond to ambiguous social behavior in a more negative, off-putting fashion, thereby confirming their construal of the world as threatening and beyond their control."**

- "Loneliness" by John T. Cacioppo & Louise C. Hawkley

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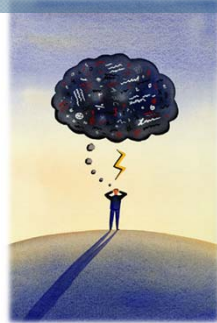
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## The Language of Loneliness

### The Critical Inner Voice:

- The critical inner voice is a well-integrated pattern of destructive thoughts toward ourselves and others.
- The nagging "voices" that make up this internalized dialogue are at the root of much of our self-destructive and maladaptive behavior.




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## The Language of Loneliness

### The Critical Inner Voice:

- The critical inner voice is not an auditory hallucination; it is experienced as thoughts within your head.
- This stream of destructive thoughts forms an anti-self that discourages individuals from acting in their best interest.




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### How does the critical inner voice affect us?

- The critical inner voice is an internal enemy that can affect every aspect of our lives, including our self-esteem and confidence, our personal and intimate relationships and our performance and accomplishments at school and work.
- These negative thoughts undermine our positive feelings about ourselves and others and foster self-criticism, inwardness, distrust, self-denial, addiction and a retreat from goal-directed activities.




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### Feel lonely? You're not alone

**In our research, we found that the most common negative thought people have toward themselves is that they are "different from other people."**




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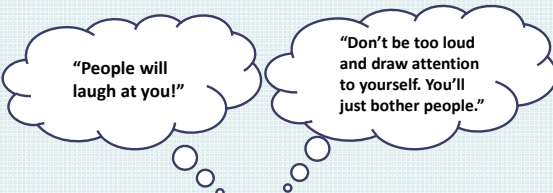
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### Lonely individuals typically:

- Fear negative evaluation
- Engage in overly cautious social behaviors that perpetuate their social isolation



Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20817823>

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### COMMON VOICES IN LONELINESS

- You just don't belong anywhere.
- No one sees you.
- Your life is so boring and empty.
- Just keep your feelings to yourself.
- You're too awkward. Just stay home.
- Nobody really likes you. You're unlovable.
- You deserve to be alone.
- No one cares about you.
- You're a burden. Stay away.
- You have nothing to offer.
- Why would anyone want to know you?
- Don't trust anyone.
- Don't reach out. You'll just get hurt.
- These people don't understand you.




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### How the Critical Inner Voice Leads Us to Feel Lonely and Isolated



When it comes to feelings of isolation, the voice can be an especially complicated and strategic enemy.

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### How the Critical Inner Voice Leads Us to Feel Lonely and Isolated

Sometimes, it will lure us into being alone with comforting-seeming thoughts.




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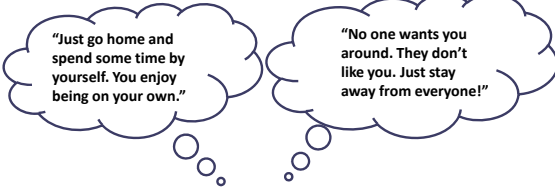
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### How the Critical Inner Voice Leads Us to Feel Lonely and Isolated

Other times, when we start feeling alone, it will viciously attack us.



"Just go home and spend some time by yourself. You enjoy being on your own."

"No one wants you around. They don't like you. Just stay away from everyone!"

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### Where do these voices come from?

Not based on reality but a self-destructive point of view we've taken on based on early life experiences.

- How much of your negative feelings about yourself came from how you felt as a kid?
- Did you often feel isolated or rejected, unseen, or misunderstood?
- Did you spend time on your own, feeling alone in your family or at school?

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## Part 3

# How to Feel Less Isolated and Alone

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## Treating Loneliness



How can we overcome the self-critical thoughts and self-sabotaging behaviors that perpetuate a cycle of solitude?

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## Four Strategies for Treating Loneliness

1. Improve social skills
2. Enhance social support
3. Increase opportunities for social contact
4. Address maladaptive social cognition  
(most successful)



Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20716644>

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## Challenging Maladaptive Social Cognitions



Efficacy of (social) cognitive behavioral therapy

Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25866548>

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## Importance of Cognitions and Emotions

*"It is vital to be alert to both verbal and nonverbal cues from the patient, so as to be able to elicit "hot cognitions"-that is, important automatic thoughts and images that arise in the therapy session itself and are associated with a change or increase in emotion. These hot cognitions may be about the patient herself ("I'm such a failure"), the therapist ("He doesn't understand me"), or the subject under discussion ("It's not fair that I have so much to do"). Eliciting the hot cognitions are important because they often have critical importance in conceptualization."*

- Judith S. Beck  
Cognitive Therapy: Basics and Beyond

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## Emotion Focused Therapy (EFT)



**"Facilitating Emotional Change: The Moment-by-Moment Process"** by L. Greenberg, Rice, and Elliot (1993). Their approach, emotion-focused therapy (EFT), focuses primarily on eliciting emotion by directing the client to amplify his or her self-critical statements.

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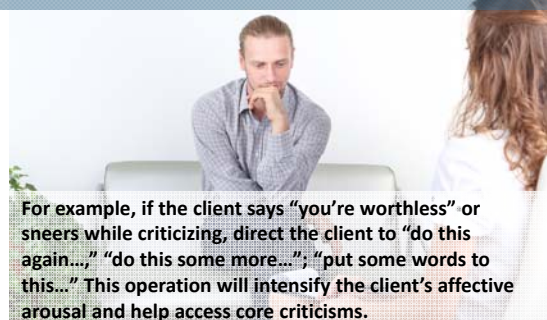
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## Emotion Focused Therapy (EFT)



For example, if the client says "you're worthless" or sneers while criticizing, direct the client to "do this again...", "do this some more...", "put some words to this..." This operation will intensify the client's affective arousal and help access core criticisms.

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### Emotion Focused Therapy (EFT)



"It is only then that they become accessible to new input and change". Greenberg et al. believe that "Affect is thus a core constituent of the human self and establishes links between self and the environment and organizes self-experience. In a sense, feelings are ultimately the meeting place of mind, body, environment, culture, and behavior"

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### Voice Therapy

Cognitive/ Affective/ Behavioral Approach





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### The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy



**Step 1**  
The person articulates his or her self-attacks in the second person and expresses any feelings that arise.

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**The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy**



**Step II**

- The person discusses reactions to saying their voices.
- The person tries to understand the relationship between these attacks and early life experiences.

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**The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy**



**Step III**

- The person answers back to the voice attacks.
- The person makes a rational statement about how he or she really is.

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**The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy**



**Step IV**

The person develops insight about how the voice attacks are influencing his or her present-day behaviors.

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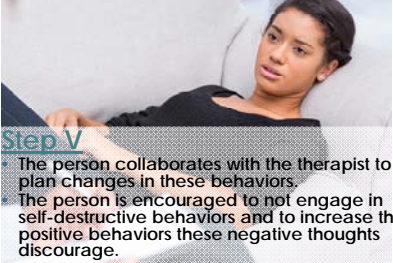
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### The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy



**Step V**

- The person collaborates with the therapist to plan changes in these behaviors.
- The person is encouraged to not engage in self-destructive behaviors and to increase the positive behaviors these negative thoughts discourage.

If you are interested in attending a voice therapy training or in getting training materials please contact [jina@glendon.org](mailto:jina@glendon.org) or visit [www.glendon.org](http://www.glendon.org).

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### Self      Anti-Self



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Let thoughts go by like a train,  
and choose not to get on.

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### Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice

#### Exercise 1.1: Visualizing the Real You

- My physical abilities
- My positive qualities
- My interests and activities
- My long-term goals
- My short-term goals
- Where do I stand in relation to my goals?


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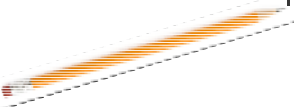
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### Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice

#### Exercise 1.2: Your Critical Inner Voice Attacks

Self-critical attacks as "I" statements	Self-critical attacks as "you" statements
Example: <i>"Nobody wants me around."</i>	Example: <i>"Nobody wants you around."</i>




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### Two Sides of the Critical Inner Voice

Actions that seem self-destructive:	Actions that seem self-protective:
Example: <i>You're such a loser. Just stay out of people's way.</i>	<i>Why put yourself out there? Just relax and stay home.</i>

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conquer your  
critical  
inner  
voice

### Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice

#### Exercise 1.3: Keeping a Journal: Your Critical Inner Voice/The Real You

My critical inner voice as "you" statements	The real me as "I" statements
<b>Examples:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You're so awkward. You're annoying everyone.</li> <li>You're making a fool of yourself. You should just hide.</li> </ul>	<i>I'm an easy-going person. I may get distracted by self-attacks, but when I'm myself, people like me.</i>  <i>No one is laughing at me. People enjoy my company.</i>

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conquer your  
critical  
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### Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice

#### Exercise 1.4: A Plan for Action

Actions dictated by my critical inner voice	Actions to take that reflect the real me
<b>Examples:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Don't bother trying. Just curl up on the couch."</li> <li>"You should just be alone."</li> <li>"You can't trust anyone, so don't get too close."</li> </ul>	<i>"I want to be active and pursue my goals."</i> <i>"I don't want to be isolated and will seek out friends"</i> <i>"I want to stay vulnerable in my close relationships."</i>

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When we learn to overcome the "critical inner voice" that tells us we are different in some basic, negative way, we can build more satisfying and meaningful connections.

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### What Therapists Can Do:

- Challenge misguided cognitive beliefs
- Offer reality-oriented feedback
- Provide validation and sense of safety
- Enhance ability to mentalize
- Improve attachment style (create a secure attachment)
- Teach emotional communication
- Help get in touch with anger that underlies loneliness



Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25782760>

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### Loneliness Interventions



- People can reduce their social avoidance by countering their critical thoughts.
- When people were primed to feel more acceptance, they were able to be more outward.

Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20817823>

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### Overcoming Feelings of Isolation

- “Voices” that you are unlikeable are much harder to accept when you’re around people who like you.
- Do not allow these “voices” to manipulate your behavior.
- Acknowledge feelings of loneliness and isolation without judgment. (i.e. “I feel alone right now, but I’m not going to give in to my inner critic.”)
- Make your actions meet your words. Avoid isolated situations.
- Go out in public. Our brains do not respond positively to seclusion.
- Place yourself in social settings and interactions.
- Try calling or texting a friend or going online. Interacting on the Internet may be a good first step in giving you the confidence to express yourself.




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Dr. Daniel Siegel:

Curious  
Open  
Accepting  
Loving




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**Self-Compassion**

*"Being touched by and not avoiding your suffering"*

**From Kristin Neff:**  
Self-compassion is not based on self-evaluation. It is not a way of judging ourselves positively; it is a way of relating to ourselves kindly.

**Three Elements:**

1. Self-kindness Vs. Self-judgment
2. Mindfulness Vs. Over-identification with thoughts
3. Common humanity Vs. Isolation

Source: <http://www.self-compassion.org/>

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**Benefits of Self-Compassion**



- Mechanism for change
- Lowers stress
- Buffers against negative social comparisons

Source: <http://www.self-compassion.org/>

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## Self-Compassion Vs. Self-Esteem

### Research from Dr. Kristin Neff:

#### Self-Esteem

- Self-esteem refers to our sense of self-worth, perceived value or how much we like ourselves.
- Low self-esteem is problematic, however trying to have higher self-esteem can also be problematic.
- The need for high self-esteem may encourage us to ignore, distort or hide personal shortcomings so that we can't see ourselves accurately.
- Our self-esteem is often contingent on our latest success or failure, meaning that our self-esteem fluctuates.

Source: <http://www.self-compassion.org/>

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## Self-Compassion Vs. Self-Esteem

### Research from Dr. Kristin Neff:

#### Self-Compassion

- Self-compassion is not based on self-evaluations.
- People feel compassion for themselves, because all human beings deserve compassion and understanding, not because they possess some particular set of traits.
- Research indicates that in comparison to self-esteem, self-compassion is associated with greater emotional resilience, more accurate self-concepts, more caring relationship behavior, as well as less narcissism and reactive anger.

Source: <http://www.self-compassion.org/>

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## Studies show that self-compassion has a significant positive association with:

- ✓ Happiness
- ✓ Optimism
- ✓ Positive affect
- ✓ Wisdom
- ✓ Personal initiative
- ✓ Curiosity and exploration
- ✓ Agreeableness
- ✓ Conscientiousness
- ✓ Extroversion




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## Taking Action

Loneliness is a feeling, and being isolated is an action



...both can be challenged.

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## Identifying Defenses

- Were there actions you took as a kid that led you to feel isolated and lonely?
- What actions did you take to cope with feeling isolated and lonely?
- What ways we you self-sufficient or pseudo-independent?
- How did you self-parent, both self-punishing and self-soothing?
- What actions do you engage in that help you hold on to an old, negative self-image?
- What patterns do you currently engage in that lead you to feel isolated?




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## Steps of Differentiation

**Step 1:** Break with internalized thought processes (i.e., critical, hostile attitudes toward self and others)

**Step 2:** Separate from negative personality traits assimilated from parents

**Step 3:** Relinquish patterns of defense formed as an adaptation to painful events in childhood

**Step 4:** Develop own values, ideals, and beliefs rather than automatically accepting those grown up with




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## Generosity and Volunteering

- One way to counteract feeling hopeless is to think outside of ourselves.
- Believe beyond all doubt that you have something to offer.
- Volunteering gives you the opportunity to connect with new people.
- Even little acts of generosity can have a significant impact on mood.
- Generosity, as a principle, can lead to stronger self-esteem, which then leads to more social behavior.




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## Guidelines for Continued Personal Development

- Be aware of the fear that accompanies change.
- Differentiation – unlearn old behaviors, learn new behaviors.
- Become more aware of how critical inner voices hold you back and make you feel lonely.
- Recognize the value of friendship.
- Practice being generous in all your relationships.

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*A human being is a part of a whole, called by us 'universe', a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest... a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.*

- Albert Einstein

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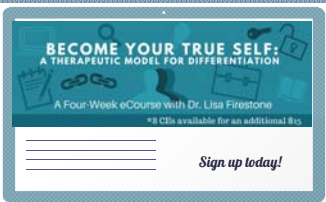
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## Books

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### Continuing Education Information

CEs for this Webinar are optional and sold separately through R. Cassidy Seminars. A link to purchase 1.5 CEs will be e-mailed to registrants following the live Webinar. For those purchasing or watching this Webinar as an archived recording, a link to purchase home study CEs was provided with your purchase confirmation. Registrants can earn 2 home study CEs by watching the Webinar and completing a reading assignment.

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## Thanks!

**Any questions?**



**Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.**  
lfirestone@glendon.org



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