

# Why Solitude Is Not The Same As Isolation

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## The Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO)

Technology aided virtual life has marred our current existence, thereby isolation is inadvertently imposed by ignoring ourselves and those in the vicinity. Staring at the backlit screen of personal devices consumes our waking moments. We are compulsively searching for nothing we want and learning about someone we don't know. This hoarding of nothing and everything, is perhaps a manifestation of our desire to seek the world beyond, at the cost of the world within!

We bridge the gap of this seeming isolation by asserting our presence through compulsive updates on social media and reinforcing that of others, through emojis and clicking the 'like' sign. We then expect and wait for the reciprocation of likes and thus form an illusion of knowing ourselves through others. Although we feel connected in the (digital) space, we have become lonely.

Unsurprisingly, the very thought of being cut off from others brings intense fear and apprehension. And the associated restlessness, is camouflaged by a fidgety appearance of doing something as soon as we are alone or have a moment to ourselves. The nervous stutter, seen in social or awkward situations, seems to have taken a physical form, wherein one is repeatedly checking their smartphone. This impatient pretence of connection is a

mere manifestation of isolation. In essence, it's an edginess, underpinned by fear of missing out (FOMO). Perhaps, we have come to equate loneliness with a sense of horror.

## Solitude Is Not Isolation

One of the vast omissions of modern life, is solitude. It may be due to a wide misconception that solitude equates to isolation and loneliness. It is important to understand that both solitude and isolation, imply being alone but are completely different.

Solitude is a conscious choice that comes from a personal yearning to be alone and getting a better perspective of oneself. For example, choosing to be alone in a serene, tranquil place can be driven by the desire to connect as one, with nature and more importantly with the self. Solitude is a positive state, as it's not withdrawing or going away from others and society. On the contrary, it is immersing into your being.

On the other hand, isolation is the state of separation or being apart from others. It is a form of suppression or withdrawal.

Isolation may be externally imposed due to work or place of stay, or internally effected during fragile emotional states. So, one can cut away from others or feel alone, even while amongst them. All too often, it is also inflicted upon oneself through a 'new way of life or digital life.' When isolated, the feeling of disconnect can be profound. For many, isolation invokes fear of abandonment, rejection and lack of belonging.



## The Importance Of Solitude

Humans are social beings and connection with others is inherent. But we deserve 'me time,' which is time with ourselves, to get that sense of coherence and harmony within ourselves. It helps us to relate in better terms with the world. Great thinkers and practitioners of meditation assert that you must learn to be truly alone, to get a deeper understanding of yourself and unravel who you are. Being in your own company can give you the ability to shape and adjust your life and make you aware of your inner strength, so that you can satisfy your needs, rather than having to rely on others.

According to influential mystic, guru and spiritual teacher Osho, "To be alone is fundamental and foundational. In the mother's womb you are alone, entirely alone. The hankering of nirvana or

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enlightenment, is a deeply imprinted memory of the experience of a mother's womb. You have known that aloneness and the bliss of it, where no one was there to interfere or disturb you. There was no language, no conflict and peace was intrinsic. You were deep in yourself.

You are not consciously aware of the fact, but this is profoundly imprinted and hidden in the unconscious." Osho disagrees with religious teaching which proposes that man must move into solitariness to know oneself. Instead, he suggests one must be in solitude, not forever, but for a period and that period will depend on the individual. He cited that Buddha was in solitude for six years, Mahavira for ten years, but Christ only for a few days.

Self-imposed isolation can be avoided by putting away devices and choosing real world connect and interaction. Furthermore, when isolation is imposed otherwise, make an effort to use the precious moments with meditative practice to convert isolation into solitude and allow for the awareness to reconnect with yourself. Solitude can either be achieved in a crowd, or by going away to the mountain or to serene quiet places.



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