



Feeling lonely? Try turning toward...

Many people experience loneliness, a feeling of being emotionally or socially disconnected from those around them, at some stage in their life. Going through a rocky patch in a relationship is a common cause for feeling lonely, even though people may surround you. By recognising the warning signs you can be proactive, learn and apply emotional first aid strategies and enjoy stronger relationships.

Loneliness in a marriage or partnership

Dr. John Gottman has conducted unique research into the dynamics of married couples. In his book* he describes four stages which he calls 'The Distance and Isolation Cascade'. **Stage 1:** Considering your relationship issues as severe. **Stage 2:** Feeling that talking things over with each other is useless. **Stage 3:** Starting to live parallel lives and **Stage 4:** Loneliness. It's worth noting that loneliness is preceded by three distinct stages, each presenting an **opportunity to take action**.

Early intervention is always the easiest intervention

Some health conditions have well known early warning signs that present an opportunity to introduce change and prevent further damage. The same is true of relationship health; early action can make all the difference.

Loneliness is often associated with a misperception that, "No one cares." This can cause you to **'turn away' from the very ones who do care**, reinforcing the faulty perception and leaving you even more miserable. 'Turning away' can be obvious; literally turning your back, jumping to conclusions about an innocent remark/situation, refusing the other party's attempt to connect or more subtly, falsely declaring, "I'm fine." even if you're not. 'Turning away' makes it much more difficult for others to demonstrate they care.

'Turn toward' for deeper connection

'Turning toward' is an emotional first aid strategy that will create connection and lead to feeling better. Start with simple things. Smile. Share how you feel. Don't blame or shame, state how you'd like things to be. Create common goals. Eat together. Play together. Be willing to accept bids for connection – an extended hand or an invitation to talk. Begin to let go of old hurts and create the future you want. If necessary, visit with a professional who can assist with developing communication and conflict resolution skills.

*Reference: Gottman, John (1997), "Why Marriages Succeed or Fail and How to Make Yours Last"

Bare Hands is run by allied health professionals committed to helping women embrace positive change by providing access to practical education. To find out more give us a call, email us or visit www.barehands.com.au.

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- ✓ Loneliness is a feeling of being disconnected. The remedy? Creating connection.
- ✓ Warning signs are an invitation to take action early.
- ✓ It's never too late to live happily ever after.

"So it's not gonna be easy. It's going to be really hard; we're gonna have to work at this everyday, but I want to do that because I want to..."

Nicholas Sparks

Encouraging women to develop and enjoy dynamic family relationships is Laurie's special focus. With four children, a clinical practice and as the co-founder of Bare Hands, she understands many of the challenges of modern day families and has spent the last 30 years studying and practising strategies and skills that really make a difference.



Laurie Morrison Co-founder Bare Hands, Mother, B.HSc, Strategic Psychotherapist.

Bare Hands
Practical life strategies for women