

Six Steps to Fight Loneliness in Your Marriage

As humans, we are not meant to be isolated. We all crave deep and lasting connections with other people. But we know it's possible to feel alone in the middle of a crowd, and it's possible to sleep in the same bed with someone for years and still feel lonely. Many of us never expect to be lonely in marriage, hoping that our spouse will be the lifelong companion who saves us from loneliness. Over time, however, couples can gradually disconnect from one another and find themselves feeling isolated and withdrawn.

Loneliness is not just about physical proximity, it's about emotional connection. FamilyLife's Dr. Dennis Rainey and his wife, Barbara, explain, "You may have sex, but you don't have love. You may talk, but you don't communicate. You live together, but you don't share life." If you're feeling lonely in your marriage, here are some ways to reconnect with your spouse:

Make the first move. Feelings of loneliness are seldom felt by only one person in a relationship. If you're feeling isolated, chances are your spouse is, too. Take the first step to reconnecting with them, even if it's just a small gesture. Open up to them about how you feel and give them an opportunity to do the same. Healing cannot begin if you hide or mask your pain.

Forgive past hurts. Especially if you have been feeling alone for a long time, hurts have likely been building up in your marriage. Nothing breeds loneliness more than unforgiven hurt and conflict. If you have been wronged, make the decision to forgive your spouse. And if you have wounded them, seek their forgiveness immediately.

Spend time together. This seems like a no-brainer, but sometimes couples get so busy or caught up in their individual lives that they neglect to simply spend time together. The less time a couple spends together, the more likely they are to feel distant from each other. This can be resolved by deliberately scheduling date nights in, date nights out, TV-free nights, and occasional weekend getaways—just for the two of you.

Make your time count. The quantity of time together is important, but so is the quality of that time. Couples have to be intentional about their time together to create a marital connection. When you and your spouse are talking, put down your cell phone, set aside distractions, and focus on each other. Find ways to bond over shared experiences: taking a walk, cooking dinner, going to a concert or sporting event, or playing a board game or cards together. Encourage and compliment your spouse. Make your moments together count.

Prioritize physical closeness. This is not just referring to sexual intimacy, though that is certainly an important part of marital closeness, but also to the little things that may have fallen by the wayside like holding hands or snuggling on the couch. The key to resurrecting physical touch is to start small. Sit close to each other, give neck massages, and pull out a surprise kiss. Getting closer physically will naturally lead to feeling closer emotionally.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. While the idea of seeking outside input on your marriage can be intimidating to many people, nearly every couple can benefit from marriage counseling. Getting an outside perspective can be extremely helpful to you and your spouse.

You may feel lonely in your marriage, but you are not alone in the struggle for marital intimacy. We have all experienced loneliness in our lives, but you don't have to feel it in your marriage.

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