

BREAKING WINTER ISOLATION

FINDING BALANCE AND *connection*

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We are in the thick of the holiday season with cooler temperatures and earlier nights. If we have friends and family to celebrate with, the hustle and bustle can provide us with energy and joy, or it may leave some feeling depleted and lonely. Holidays are often advertised as a joyous time to honor loved ones, spread cheer, and gather. If we are fortunate to have others to enjoy these times with, it can be easy to forget that not everyone has the same holiday experience. Not all of us have a family or may have strained relationships, or the distance is too far with limited time and finances.

When shorter days have us ready for bed and Netflix in the early evening, we may find ourselves hibernating more frequently. Hibernation can quickly fall into self-isolation. Isolation can rapidly become a pattern and struggle. We often do not recognize the issue until we are in the depths of it. Isolation can lead to disconnect, loneliness, low self-confidence, depression, and suicide.

We all need time to relax and unwind, free from the obligations of others. But we thrive best with balancing needs and demands. If you or someone you know has a difficult time with holidays or the cold winter months, try finding the balance between the two.

Here are some ways we can stay connected to others and decrease the likeliness of isolation and loneliness:

- Get involved in a hobby or activity that meets anywhere from weekly to monthly.
- Get involved with an organization or community outreach that speaks to you.
- Volunteer with your favorite charity or a charity that personally helped you or a loved one.
- Make plans with friends that include specific dates & times (this can include time together, FaceTime, phone calls, online gaming, whatever best fits your schedules).
- Set time aside for some self-care (this can be done alone; just make sure it's something that sparks joy or comfort.)
- Check out local and free events happening near you. Events are often listed on social media accounts and library newsletters.
- Use your benefits offered through your employer's EAP.

We thrive best when we feel appreciated and supported. The same is true for those we care about. If you are struggling and lonely, someone you know may be having a similar experience. Reaching out to others can be hard when we are down or feel forgotten, but that connection is beneficial to our overall well-being. Letting others know we need them gives them permission to need us, too. We can grow and thrive together if we give ourselves the opportunity.

