

Becoming Wise – at Any Age
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“I never feel lonely. I love my time alone—to read, or listen to music, or take a walk or just to be. But I also love time with my friends, with my children and grandchildren, with people I meet on the street. Being involved with the world keeps me from feeling lonely.” Brenda in Psychology Today

Most of us don’t feel this way.

So how can we?

To answer that, Salvatore Di Somma, Ph.D. did a study on loneliness in two very different populations of the world; one in Cilento, Italy and the other in San Diego, California. The groups spoke different languages and had different historical, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

He discovered that despite these differences, both groups showed statistically meaningful evidence that **the more wisdom individuals exhibited, the LESS LONELY THEY FELT.**

But doesn’t wisdom only come with age, time and experience?

To determine this, Dr. F. Diane Barth decided to do a little non-scientific research on her own. Here’s what she found.

Wisdom comes with the ability **to see ourselves in THE BIGGER PICTURE;** a picture which varies from person to person, and from time to time.

In other words, wisdom involves **EXPANDING YOUR BASE.**

In his book, *Timeless: Nature’s Formula for Health and Longevity*, Louis Cozolino, professor of psychology at Pepperdine University, tells us that our brains are physically **wired for connection**. This means that maximizing interactions with others keep our brains active and engaged.

And keeping our brains active and engaged takes away the loneliness.

However, you don't have to be surrounded by friends and family to have a connected brain. In fact, according to Ursula M. Staudinger, author of *A Psychology of Wisdom: History and Recent Developments, Research in Human Development*, wisdom involves a number of things: good judgment, moderation, and the ability to look for a moderate course between extremes.

So let's create some applications from these which we can apply to our lives.

1. **Don't define yourself based on a moment.** Loneliness is a moment in time, a blip on the screen. It doesn't tell me that I'm bad or unlovable. It's not about me and it's not permanent. I can always do something about it."
2. **Connect in small ways.** We don't feel lonely when we're connected. Even if we're not talking to anyone we love or care about, we know we can always find a person who we feel some sort of link to—even if it's a stranger on a bus.

In fact, it is amazing what a simple smile can do...both for the person and for ourselves! I love to smile at a stranger and ask, "How are you doing through all this?" And they usually react with a smile.

3. **Do something kind or compassionate for someone else.** Loneliness is a bit selfish. There will ALWAYS be people out there who are feeling far lonelier than you do. ALL of us need some kindness or compassion in their lives, especially now. In fact, as soon as we do something kind for someone—even if it's just saying hello and asking them how they're doing—the loneliness we may be feeling becomes a little less.
4. **Take a positive action.** There are people in the world who, for emotional or physical reasons, CANNOT reach out to other people. That's *true* loneliness! YOU can touch their lives. And when you do, your own loneliness ebbs away!
5. **LOOK AT THE BIGGER PICTURE.** All of us are located in a much larger context. You live in a town, a city, and in the country. All of those are in the United States of America, then the Continent of North America; the Western Hemisphere; the Earth; the Solar System; the Universe; the Mind of God.

As soon as I start thinking about that, my loneliness dissipates a bit more.

WOW!

So...wisdom (say the researchers) involves seeing things in the bigger picture. It involves our capacity to see things as complex, multi-faceted,

contradictory, and let's face it; a little crazy! But then looks for ways to manage this craziness with flexibility.

I am sure you know plenty of elderly people who do not have these skills. However, you also know young people who DO have these skills. This is simply to say that wisdom does NOT always come with age.

It can be developed in each of us no matter how old we are.

You may have never thought this way before, but when we put ourselves into a larger context, we can see connections we have never seen before

So...no matter where you are now in your life...it is wonderful to remember that there is always a bigger picture out there.

And now that the virus is diminishing; just thinking about this gets me excited.

Wow again!