



Why Adults Need to Party Much More: The Growing Loneliness Epidemic in America & Beyond ★★★★★

I'll bet you need to enjoy life more. In particular, I'll bet you need to party more.

Perhaps that sounds juvenile. Nonetheless, the statement is actually *especially* true if your high school and college years are long behind you. It is even truer if you are married and truest of all if you also have children and even grandchildren. You need to party more.

See, common knowledge says we're increasingly connected to one another. But that's a load of nonsense. Oh sure, with the Web, email, instant messaging, cell phones, real-time production and distribution technologies, big and fast planes and all the rest, the world is indeed smaller and smaller in terms of our access to one another's surfaces – we can now communicate basic thoughts, instructions, opinions, pictures and videos to those down the street or on the other side of the world in moments. We can order flowers online today and hand them to our significant others tomorrow – flowers that just a few days before were still attached to their roots in Ecuadorian greenhouses or Chinese fields.

That's all neat-o.

But speed and volume of contact have nothing to do with depth of contact. You can exchange requests via email and cell phone with hundreds of people per day every day, you can blast out your opinion on dozens of news stories and other topics via the Web in a matter of hours, you can post videos of yourself on YouTube for tens of thousands to see, you can even get a TV show and spout your opinion to millions, but that is all merely presenting the surfaces you want others to see. That is not opening yourself emotionally to anyone, nor is it allowing others to open themselves personally to you. No face-to-face, no mutual letting down the guard and being real, no shared vulnerability, no experiencing one another's physical energy in response to intense conversation and experiencing the stuff of life together. Instead, from behind your computer monitor, your cubicle walls, your office door, or the fortress of your home and vehicle, it is all a script. A form of hiding.

Bonding, if it can even be called that, is awfully tenuous when it is merely surface-to-surface.

And so with everything cited above -- and with the increasing length of time people spend working, the decreasing amount of time people spend on leisure activities (now at its lowest level since World War II in the U.S.), the hefty chunk of what leisure time they do have wasted on watching TV, and other factors -- we are more isolated from experiencing the depths of one another than at any time in human history.



We are very lonely.

In fact, those who research such things say we are experiencing a loneliness epidemic. A recent study in the *Journal of Clinical Nursing* based on adults in the UK and Australia found that one in three now consider themselves lonely there. Another recent study published in the *American Sociological Review* found that the average American now has only two close friends in whom they can confide on important matters – down from an average of three in 1985. Those who say they have NO ONE to talk to on a personal level went from 10 percent in 1985 to almost 25 percent in 2004. An additional 19 percent had only one confidant – usually their spouse.

Of course, the older you are the more likely it is that you don't need statistics like these to confirm the growing sense of isolation and loneliness in the U.S. and apparently elsewhere in the Western world; you can probably cite many external examples of it, you likely feel it yourself, and you likely already know that in addition to being one of the worst feelings one can have, loneliness poses real health risks including a weakened immune system.

I am 37 years old, perhaps young according to at least some people reading this (I hope), but I have definitely seen and felt a strong societal shift to increased isolation and loneliness in my lifetime. For example, in the neighborhood I grew up in on the northwest side of Chicago, neighbors really did get to know their neighbors in-depth. There were backyard get-togethers, block parties, and evening socials in front rooms or on front steps. The same was typical for my relatives who lived in different neighborhoods throughout Illinois and the U.S. Meanwhile, if they weren't being forced to do homework or chores or to go to sleep, the neighborhood kids -- me included -- spent their lives with each other at the park, in the alley, down the street, or somewhere (anywhere!) outside.

Today we're lucky if we even know the first names of the people who live next door and across the street from us. Today many kids seem to think of the outside as that place you step through to move between buildings and vehicles. A few days ago where I live now there was a snowstorm and – whereas in my youth that would inevitably mean two thousand and six kids rolling it, throwing it, sledding on it, and (the bad boys) skitching on it as soon as school let out – there has only been one pair of children (out of many I see get off the school bus and enter their homes) who has played in it since. In front of people's houses on street after street around here, the snow lies untouched.

Which is all to say, I'll bet you need to party more.

Not “party” in the limited college fraternity sense (though if that is what you desire, well, just be careful out there.) Instead, party in the sense of regularly getting together with people aside from or in addition to the one or two you may already be lucky enough to confide in to do something (anything!) enjoyable. This might be something you currently appreciate, like dancing, playing board games, praying, knitting, discussing books, singing, or simply talking, or something new you always wanted to try since novelty usually adds an additional layer of enjoyment.

The real purpose, of course, is to open up, let go, enjoy and *be* with other people ... and thereby really experience those other people, which as social beings is what we ultimately thrive on, and how we ultimately expand ourselves. Away goes that sense of isolation, and a real new friend or two is often also made in the process.

No human is an island. It doesn't matter if you're trying to shield yourself with the biggest computer monitor or sleekest cell phone out there. It doesn't matter if your voice is carried on every TV in the country or if you're a millionaire or billionaire. Lonely and despondent kings and queens are a cliché. Side-by-side and face-to-face we need to experience the depths and energies of other people, and to open ourselves so others can experience ours. The more the merrier. If that is being juvenile, then being juvenile is about the healthiest thing you can be.

So party on.

[Oh Hey, a P.S. Please sure to subscribe to this free “Live Deeper” blog; you’ll get short pieces as well as long pieces like this encouraging and enabling you to enjoy life a little bit to a lot of bit more, and perhaps best of all, you’ll eventually get invitations to some seriously intense and wonderful events really enabling you to “live deeper” (subscribe and you’ll see what I mean). Don’t have any idea how to subscribe to a blog? Start by clicking on the [RSS 2.0 button](#) above, and then check out the Wikipedia article it links to. And finally, I’d love to hear your comments, and others might as well, so please sign up above and leave a comment here, too. Now as mentioned, please party on. ☺]



Posted: Thursday, February 22, 2007 11:43 PM by [Brian Vaszily](#)
Filed under: [happiness](#), [enjoy life](#), [party](#), [loneliness epidemic](#), [loneliness](#)

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[rojoreno](#) said:

Brian,

Some good points in you article. Excuse me for being skeptical and i hope its unfounded. As I was reading your article, I kept thinking when is he going to slip in his sales pitch (or maybe you will in your next post). Anyway I hope you are sincere, although the advertising/marketing business is full of duplicitous individuals; after all their business is based on lying.

I look forward to your next article.

Best,

LM

February 25, 2007 7:30 AM