



Excerpt from  
**Skin Hunger in  
Coronavirus Times**

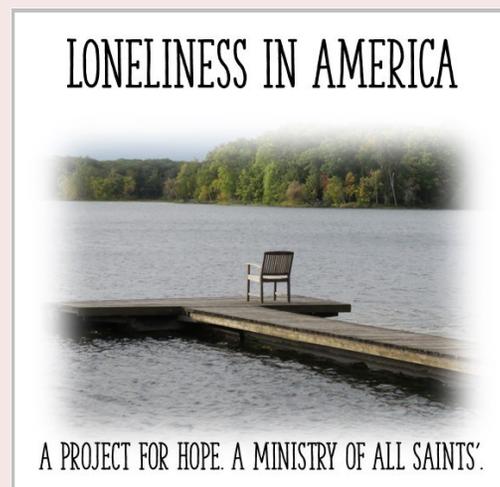
My dearest friend  
sits across a vast emptiness  
As we blow meager breaths  
of squeezed intimacy  
across the divide.  
A word of understanding  
from six feet away  
Does not a comforting hug make.  
We trudge bravely through  
the techno-jungle  
Of zoom and skype and facetime  
For desperate connection.  
We have been relegated  
To the emotional ice floes of our times.  
I will ask the true and painful question:  
Might I be putting off the dying  
of this flesh  
While each lonely hour  
shrivels my soul?

*By Vilma O. Ginzberg*

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For more resources, visit:  
[allsaintsoncentral.org/loneliness-project](https://allsaintsoncentral.org/loneliness-project)

## Loneliness in the Midst of Pandemic



**ALL SAINTS'**  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH & DAY SCHOOL  
PHOENIX, ARIZONA

One day we will remember the pandemic of 2020 as history, but at this writing, and the birth of the Loneliness in America Project, it is a real burden for people around the world. As poet Vilma O. Ginzberg asks, do we protect the body at the risk of the soul? Feelings of profound loneliness have never been more acute, but our means of addressing them never more limited. How can we feel less lonely when we are forced into social distancing and the activities that kept us socially connected have ceased, at least for the time being?

It is difficult, but not impossible, to support your emotional well-being despite these barriers. Strategies for success include working inside yourself, communicating mindfully, healthy routines, and service to others.

The biggest battle is in your own mind and we must remember that *loneliness is not the same thing as being alone*. The degree to which you suffer is dependent upon what your mind does with the experience. Suffering is a mental construct, not an objective one. When you spend less time with others and more time alone, you may find a critical voice in your mind, feeding you a stream of discouraging commentary. But if you reach out, you will probably find that other people miss you in the same ways that you miss them.

We are powerfully in charge of our experience of life so challenging the discouraging voice when it arises is critical if we are to fight depression and

anxiety. The inner critic will also try to impact your behavior. “Don’t bother getting out of bed this morning. It’s too much effort to call someone.” These actions only perpetuate loneliness. It’s much better to do the thing you know will help you, even when you don’t feel like it. Behavior generates emotion, not the other way around. Happiness is not an unending state of joy, it is an increasing capacity to deal with difficult emotions.



*“When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.”*

*Viktor Frankl*

Secondly, think about the ways you communicate and prioritize those that serve your instinctive need for human connection. This starts by being aware of how different kinds of communication

uplift or discourage you. Some people find video calls awkward and unfulfilling and some find them energizing. Telephone calls engage us in tight human to human contact. It’s the feeling that your mouth is right next to the other person’s ear. Some researchers suggest that these interactions are important and encourage us to we make a 15-minute call to someone we care about every day. During that phone call, focus on the other person. Resist multi-tasking and try to genuinely listen.

Third, build a routine of meaningful activities. Wake and sleep at the same time as usual and don’t sleep late as it worsens depression. Find ways to exercise and make small goals for the week. Embrace solitude and try meditation, prayer, art, music, or time spent outdoors. Understand that loneliness may affect your motivation but if you can lead with a virtuous behavior you’ll find that your mood may improve.

Lastly, find creative ways to serve others. Service helps us see our own blessings more clearly and offers perspective. Service fosters gratitude, which is a powerful weapon against the unhelpful inner voice.

Loneliness is something that feels involuntary most of the time. If you can shift your thinking and realize that in the whole of your life, you have this one moment approved for a generative and empowering experience of solitude, which often IS a choice, this pandemic season might become an opportunity for inner growth, as well as a challenge to be endured.