

Thank you for your interest in this topic. If you have any questions about this, or any issue, please contact our office at 214-642-8737

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## Newsletter of Stonebriar Counseling Associates

### ☐ Differences: Loneliness and Aloneness

In the medical field diagnosis comes before prescription. And, if the doctor makes a correct diagnosis will the patient be in a position to reap the benefits of the appropriate remedy? Every one experiences loneliness in different ways. Some may experience it as a vague feeling that something is not right...a feeling of emptiness or hollowness deep within their very being. Or one may feel loneliness by the circumstance or environment that they are in. For example, it may be a cold Fall day with nothing to do, or, going on a business trip with no companionship, working alone on a night shift missing family and friends. This type of loneliness called "*state loneliness*," usually does not last very long (i.e. a few days or a week). On the other hand, a person may experience loneliness all the time-called "*trait loneliness*-" the result of a very intense deprivation or deep pain. This is the type of loneliness that stays with an individual wherever they go and produces a feeling of bleakness or desolation. The difference between loneliness and aloneness is that the latter refers to an active state. A person may choose to be alone treasuring their time for personal contemplation, relaxation, or reflection. Therefore, to be alone is to be by oneself-where there is no one else around you. Whereas, to be lonely, is to suffer



the feelings of being alone and feeling sad about it. Loneliness is a passive state maintained by passively letting it continue and doing nothing to change it. Even though we feel lonely, it is when we become trapped in either a state or trait of loneliness that lays out a tortuous course of pain and suffering.

### ☐ Feelings of Loneliness

Each person has an insatiable longing to love and be loved. While loneliness robs us of such opportunities one of the feelings produced is pain. Some have equated it with hurt, sorrow, torn up, bleeding, and broken. All of these point to an individual whose spirit is deeply crushed and depressed. Another feeling is that of being lost and confused. As if one is blinded, drowning, or clueless without a sense of meaning and understanding of the world around them. This feeling is largely attributed to a lack of emotional support and encouragement for the individual to develop a sense of security. One of the founding researchers on loneliness, Robert Weiss, believed that loneliness comes when there is that loss or absence of an attachment figure. In babies, a caretaker (usually a mother) is the attachment figure. When that mother leaves the room or doesn't give the child the attention he/she needs, the baby cries for her mother and is restless and listless without her. So too, is our experience of loneliness when we have lost or are missing that attachment figure. We cry or are listless, we search everywhere to find that attachment figure, so that we can

once again feel secure and feel loved. Weiss referred to this type of loneliness as *loneliness of emotional isolation*. Each of us has been created for relationship. There is a hunger for others to be close to us, to love us and be connected emotionally. As in the recent block buster Hollywood movie, Castaway, actor Tom Hanks – deserted on an island- made a friend out of a volleyball. The need for people is very real, and when it is not satisfied we can become enveloped within our own delusions until someone comes into our life to break us out of this feeling of nothingness. In some cases, loneliness can become so overwhelming that an individual feels unable to take control. Not knowing how much more pain he/she can take, the feeling resembles a balloon past its normal capacity. There is this inescapable reality that wherever they turn loneliness is waiting to stare them in the face. Consequently, it becomes so overwhelming that they give up trying thereby allowing loneliness to become objectified into a personality that has its own power. One final feeling associated with loneliness is numbness-cold, frozen, void of any emotion. At some point in time, the emotional part of the brain called the Amygdala shuts down causing the individual to become emotionally detached from other people. Overburdened with pain, hurt and sorrow, they develop passive mental walls to protect themselves from anyone that once brought happiness. In some cases, they may have been

treated in a rejecting manner. Whether they were lied to, made fun of, abandoned or abused verbally and physically-defensive walls are constructed in order to be protected from the negative environment around them. The emotional center of the brain stops firing and causes the individual to develop a false sense of security for them not to feel.

### ▣ Coping Strategies

So what do people do when they are lonely? Researchers Rubenstein and Shaver reveal a few important categories for how people have learned to cope with loneliness. The first type is called **“active solitude.”** Someone who is feeling lonely has a tendency to engage in active behaviors, like writing, journaling, reading, exercising, working on a hobby, going to a movie, playing music, etc. This type of coping is believed to be a healthy behavior as it takes one’s mind away from the loneliness and directs the focus onto something positive or creative. The second type of coping is **spending money.** I have had clients who thought that spending money for things not needed from an empty checking account was the correct way to deal with the pain. In this instance there is false sense of security to desensitize their underlying feelings. The third coping mechanism is **sad passivity.** This type of feeling amplifies loneliness instead of relieving it. This results in behaviors such as watching television, sleeping, eating or sitting idle for excessive periods of time. Sad passivity can cause feelings of powerlessness leaving the individual unable to move onto something more positive.

### ▣ Causes of Loneliness

People are created with a two-fold need: fellowship with God and companionship with other fellow human beings. The social instinct is deeply embedded within all of us, and when this need is unsatisfied we become most vulnerable to loneliness. Research indicates that the experiences most conducive to acute loneliness are: the death of a life partner or other family member, a separation or divorce, or, a broken engagement. All of these incur deep emotional trauma. It may be relieved only by developing an alternative congenial association. And, when social loneliness does occur, people in this state of mind need a group of caring and supportive friends. I believe that the local church can meet this need via home groups where members demonstrate a mutual interest in one another’s welfare (cf. Hb. 10: 24, 25). Therefore, the first step is to help the individual plug into such a group with friends who will take notice and be understanding with support as needed. A second cause of loneliness is the feeling of being unable to fit in. Sometimes lonely individuals feel like a misfit or someone who cannot fit in with the rest of the crowd. Other times it may be their inability to initiate or maintain a stable, satisfying relationship especially with members of the opposite sex. The third cause is from physical, verbal, psychological abuse and rejection. When told statements like, “you’re no good,” “I don’t love you,” or, “we don’t want you around,” these assaults



become so overwhelming that the individual may escape to a world of loneliness or suicidal ideation (see page 4). One of the distressing features is that the lonely person loses a sense of their identity. It is no wonder then that such people take on an egocentric profile instead of gaining a sense of security to face the world.

### ▣ Cures for Loneliness

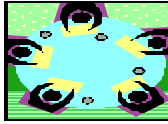
To stop feeling lonely, one must first accept that they are feeling lonely. In fact, the simple admission may sometimes be difficult especially if they never realized a difference in their personality. Blaise Pascal, the French scientist, believed that in every human heart there exists a God-shaped vacuum. Even before Pascal was Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, who said, “God created man for Himself and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Him.” Consequently, the greatest need for a lonely person is to be shown that God desires to fill the vacuum in their heart. Christ identified Himself thoroughly with our humanity that He experienced acute loneliness. After His disciples abandoned Him, Jesus presented an unshaken confidence in the Father’s abiding presence: “You will leave Me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for My Father is with Me.” (Jn. 16:32). As you counsel someone who is experiencing loneliness make every attempt to encourage them to see the blessing and benefit of His conscious presence. Also, encourage the individual to write a prayer, poem, or song to God expressing their deepest feelings inside. In so doing, this will help them discover a number of things that might be connected to loneliness, including sadness, resentment, bitterness, and anger. Beginning to see where these feelings come from and how they are connected is the necessary pathway from passivity to pro-activity.



# Newsletter of Stonebriar Counseling Associates

From the desk of....

**Bob Good**



**Sexual Addiction Group Meeting  
Tuesday Nights at 7:00 pm  
Location: SCA office**



Dear Educator and Ministry Leader:

According to the Existentialist, a human being's existence is a lonely existence. At the end of the day, we are all alone. Is it possible that someone can truly understand what it is to be you, to experience all the things you have experienced, to understand your joys and happiness, your pains and sorrows? Indeed, we may talk to other people about how we feel perhaps draw pictures, play music, etc., so as to express our deepest thoughts- but all these attempts to communicate ultimately leaves something behind. There are times when it is virtually impossible to get our thoughts or feelings across exactly the way we intended. And, the painful reality exists that ultimately we are alone, by ourselves, and ultimately lonely. None of us are immune from the hardships or difficulties of life. We live lives with similar kinds of problems as other people. But, it is the way we deal with them that separates us from the rest of the world.

Some people are better at alleviating their loneliness than other people, at hiding their monadic existence than others. For them, loneliness may be a fleeting feeling that visits them on cold winter days when human contact becomes minimal and they are left only with the thoughts in their heads. For others, loneliness is a curse, a shadow that follows them all the time, that rears its ugly head at every human contact, that surrounds them in their waking and in their dreams.

Whether we would like to agree with it or not, loneliness is a universal phenomenon. It visits every human soul at some time in every culture, every race, every class, every age, and at all times in human history. It is inescapable, and has been expressed throughout the ages in music, literature and art. To feel lonely is to join the rest of humanity in acknowledging that not only is loneliness pervasive, but it has been associated with a variety of different emotions. People who feel lonely describe it as bleakness or desolation, associated with feelings of depression, suicide, low self-esteem and aggression. And while we may suffer from loneliness we still need each other, to bond, to connect, to love. It is the paradox of human existence to seek to fill a need that can never be satisfied, to fill the vortex of loneliness in our lives.

So what is loneliness? Is it a feeling? A condition? For different people, it means different things. It is hard to describe exactly what it is, or why we feel this way. Perhaps a better question is "what is loneliness for you?" I invite you to read in the pages ahead about loneliness, its varied forms, its varied causes and the various ways that people cope with loneliness.

Sincerely,

Bob

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## ***What Are Some of the Reasons That People Consider Suicide? Who is At Risk?***

- **Depression** plays a large role in suicide. Suicide might seem like a way to end the pain, since the person can have trouble imagining another way to relieve the extreme suffering that he or she is feeling. This difficulty imagining a solution to the pain partially comes from the distorted thinking caused by depression.
- Having suffered a loss or major adverse life event, like separation, divorce, or the death of a loved one, is another warning sign.
- Sometimes the pain of abuse, whether it is physical, emotional or sexual, drives people to consider suicide.
- Abusing drugs or alcohol can also make people more vulnerable to depression and the feeling that life is not worth living.
- People who have a mental illness like **schizophrenia** or **bipolar disorder** are also at a higher risk for suicide.

## ***What Are Some of the Signs that Someone Might be Suicidal?***

It can be a frightening experience when someone you care about may be suicidal. You might just have a gut instinct that something is wrong. Or the person might have shared that s/he has been thinking about suicide, or even has a plan. Some risk factors are:

**Has the person's circumstances changed recently?** Was there a breakup of an important relationship, such as a separation or divorce? Has the person survived-or has someone close been affected by-a traumatic event, such as a natural disaster, physical assault, or a crime? Has the person recently become unemployed?

**Has the person been struggling with a difficult situation,** such as a chronic illness, physical, sexual or emotional abuse, long-term unemployment, or loneliness and isolation? Does the person abuse alcohol or drugs?

**Has the person had problems with depression?** Are these signs apparent now: loss of pleasure, a sad mood, a change in sleeping or eating patterns, feelings of hopelessness or excessive guilt? People struggling with depression are at a higher risk for suicide.

**Has the person been diagnosed with an illness like bipolar disorder or schizophrenia?** People with these illnesses have a higher risk of suicide, and circumstances can change rapidly.

**Has the person talked about suicide recently?** Expressed suicidal feelings? Made a plan for suicide? Does the person seem to be putting things in order, giving away possessions, making a will? Has the person's behavior been changing recently? Is school or work performance declining? Is he/she withdrawing from friends or family, spending more time alone?



## Upcoming Free Workshop

Please RSVP

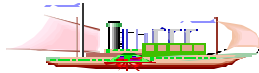


### Suicidal Intervention-Signs To look for/When To Refer—Nov.20, '03

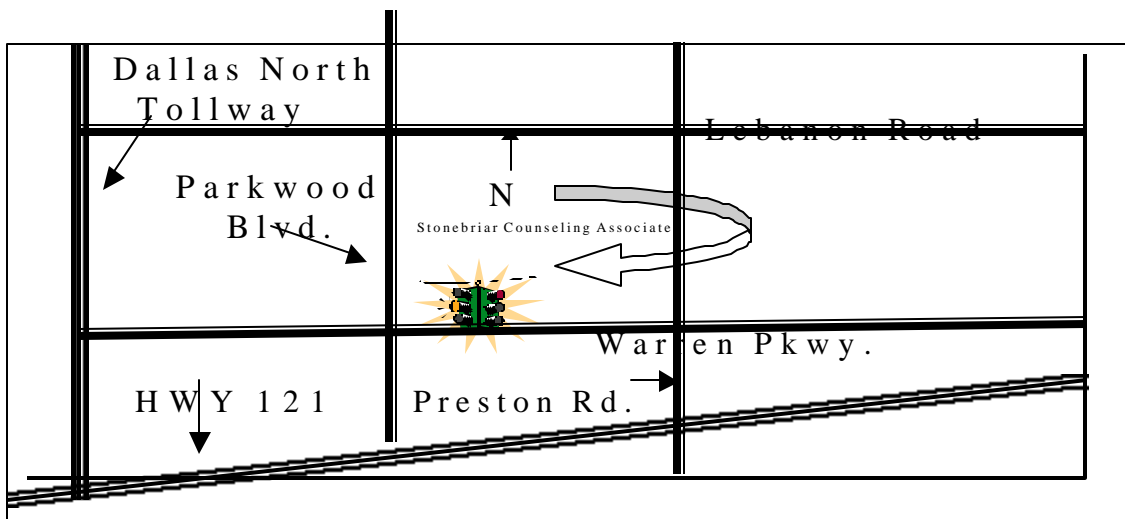
(Free Coffee and Donuts) Time: 6:30 PM

Location: 3550 Parkwood Blvd., Suite 301, Bldg. C, Frisco, Texas

Call SCA office at 214-642-8737 to register



**New Location!!**



### Mission Statement

Stonebriar Counseling Associates (SCA) is purposefully passionate in providing quality psychotherapy from a Christian perspective that influences the treatment of psychological, emotional, and mental health issues.

To this end, SCA is committed to glorify God by:

- Believing that each person has the innate ability for personal growth and wholeness.
- Seeking a variety of approaches to help you learn new skills and find more choices so as to manage life's changes with a broader range of solutions for recognizing your strengths.
- Accepting all people with respect and love regardless of age, sex, race, religion, ethnicity or socio-economic status.
- Thoughtfully affirming and carefully following the morals of the Christian faith and the ethics of the professional governing boards.
- Providing research and development for new and innovative programs, seminars, and workshops in order to further the well-being and self-sufficiency of each client.