

## Greetings!

I am writing this during election week. The existence of an “Election Day” seems like a memory from the distant past. The election drama has concretized a new level of fatigue. However, bonding over the mounting feeling of possibility this week has somehow affected last week’s experience of “aloneness.” While watching the calendar, past excitement about the seasons’ changing and the holidays dwindled.

Nothing in my life that happened, or nearly nothing, will be happening again this year. If you live in a cold climate, Thanksgiving dinner outdoors is hardly an option. And Christmas? Sigh. With a rising number of COVID infections, who knows what the end of November and December will bring. As a result, I feel a peculiar sense of missingness – of loneliness. Away from people, traditions, anticipation of my favorite season, I brace for a deeper sense of loss.

### **The Topic at Hand: Loneliness is a condition, and we’re grappling with it.**

Reaching out to people who calm me offers immediate relief. But I have noticed – over time throughout this crisis and depending on the day – my friends have less and less to give. We increasingly find ourselves sharing the stresses we both feel.

This dilemma, that so many of us do not have much left to give, left me wondering how do we understand friendship – or measure it – in such precarious times, when our friends are not as accessible to us, when we are all enduring loss and loneliness chronically? How do we get the energy that our exchange with others gives us when we are under the fog of fatigue created by the computer, when having dinner or drinks with friends is not easily available, and when the holidays themselves pose gross obstacles to connection? How do we maintain human contact when social life – face to face contact and for many touch – is made, by our condition, relatively inaccessible?

### **I’m confident that:**

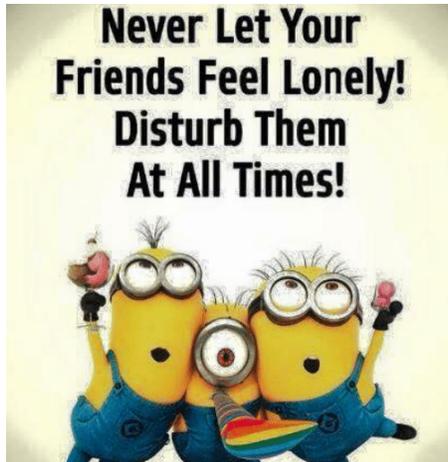
We can find a framework for friendship – one that measures our limited contact with people based on the quality of the connection instead of quantity: are we laughing together? Do we part with a sense of joy? Sometimes joy may not be the case. As Emily Dickinson states, “Parting is all we know of heaven, and all we need of hell.” If parting is difficult maybe we can look at that difficulty as a gift, the world showing us that we indeed have special people in our lives. At other times, we may experience a feeling of conflict or dismay: can we learn from this experience? Can it bring us to closer to ourselves? Does it reveal a relationship that is deepening and changing over the time of the pandemic or one that was too fragile to withstand the depth of loneliness the pandemic has triggered?

### **A reading that I love:**



I met the author while we were taping for a documentary where I talked about how shame interferes with human connection, and he talked about loneliness. Inspired by his strong gentleness, I read his book after our meeting. This book reveals the fragility of the human spirit and the depth of longing for connection we all endure. Freiberg’s capacity for really listening to what others are saying reveals a depth to the soul that would behoove us all to understand. You can access more about his loneliness trilogy of books [here](#). I promise you will learn something about yourself reading his works.

Just for laughs:



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**Join me to explore how friendship can help you have a healthy holiday!**

December 9<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 noon, I will be hosting an online workshop about strategies to have a healthy holiday. It's FREE. And you can register [here](#). Please share!