

## Homework: Independence versus Loneliness

We celebrate independence in this country; we have a holiday dedicated to our nation's independence . . . our freedom. So what about our personal freedoms? How do we attain and maintain the freedom to be self-governing and sovereign (a nation of one), the freedom to grow, to express ourselves, and to find inner peace? Why does the idea of personal independence—which has a ring of such greatness!—often feel tainted with a sense that it will lead to sadness, isolation, and loneliness?

I am no bird; and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will.  
—Charlotte Bronte

Unlike a drop of water which loses its identity when it joins the ocean, man does not lose his being in the society in which he lives. Man's life is independent. He is born not for the development of the society alone, but for the development of his self.  
—B. R. Ambedkar

Loneliness adds beauty to life. It puts a special burn on sunsets and makes night air smell better.  
—Henry Rollins

It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.  
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Self-love, self-knowing, and gentleness toward self are beneficial keys to the process. After all, loneliness doesn't really have all that much to do with being alone; it's more about inner perspective. One can be in a community, in a social group or in a marriage, and feel intense loneliness and feelings of being misunderstood. No one can be as great a friend, partner, lover, and spiritual guide to us as our essential, core, divine and loving self.  
—femmefire

Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose.  
—Kris Kristofferson

If a man does not keep pace with his companion, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer.  
—Henry David Thoreau

### *Questions to Ponder*

#### Take the “Independence versus Loneliness Quiz”:

- When you make a major decision, do you make your own decision, disregarding other people's opinions?
- Do you find yourself doing things that you'd rather not be doing to avoid being alone?
- Do you ever feel empty and alone even when you're surrounded by people?
- Do you feel rejuvenated after time spent alone?

Life: it's about personal choices.

Until a person can say deeply and honestly, "I am what I am today because of the choices I made yesterday," that person cannot say, "I choose otherwise."

—Stephen R. Covey

- When/where in your life are you independent?
- How does your independence benefit you? How does it benefit those around you?
- Is humor a necessary ingredient in differentiating between loneliness and solitude/independence?
- Would you like more or less independence in your life? From whom or what?
- Does being independent sometimes mean being unwilling to compromise? When have you stood firm for your beliefs even if significant others disagreed or didn't understand?
- What choices have you made that left you feeling lonely? Looking back, do you stand by those choices?
- What things do you do alone to support your well-being and general humanity? How does this enhance you being able to participate in and give back to your community?