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JOYFUL MUSINGS

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Are You Lonesome Tonight?

Elvis sang his way into the hearts of millions when he crooned "Are you lonesome tonight?" Hordes of adoring fans knew he was singing just to them.

For people in a joyful relationship, especially those beginning a new romance, Valentine's Day is a day of love and romance, chocolate and flowers. For those who are single or in an unfulfilling relationship, it can be a painful reminder of aloneness, stirring up feelings of loneliness and melancholy.

Loneliness is often defined as a state of sadness or anxiety from want of company. In reality, one can feel far more lonely in a crowd than when alone. Loneliness is more a state of mind than about being around people. It is a sense of apartness and not belonging, of being uncomfortable with only your own company and the thoughts in your own head.

Loneliness doesn't have to be part of your life. With a different perspective, alone-ness or solitude can be a time of self-discovery and self-renewal. Loneliness is a word to express the *pain* of being alone; *solitude* is a word to express the *glory* of being alone. Turning loneliness into solitude requires self-approval and recognition that being alone is in fact an opportunity to gain new certainty and awareness about yourself. Focus on your deficits, and you're lonely. Focus on your strengths and enjoy some solitude.

Are you lonely? Did you become that way through an experience of rejection or a lack of self-worth? Does the situation seem hopeless? There is a way out, and the way out is through solitude, even though it may not seem so at first.

Your relationship with others is based on your relationship with yourself. Until you have a loving and accepting relationship with yourself, it is impossible to have a truly loving and accepting relationship with someone else. Being alone is a perfect opportunity to begin to love yourself. Loving yourself and using your power constructively allows you to create the kind of relationships you want with others.

Because loneliness is a state of mind, you can choose to cultivate thoughts that promote feelings of wholeness instead of emptiness. Try using some of the following affirmations the next time Elvis starts asking if you're lonesome tonight.

- I am no longer just looking for the right person. I am becoming the right person.
- I am a valuable and complete person who is happy and free with or without a mate.
- When I think more positively, I attract positive-thinking people into my life with whom I can have nourishing relationships.
- I realize solitude is a good opportunity to develop my self-esteem.
- I am lovable for who I am, not for who loves me.
The more successfully I handle solitude, the more successfully I will handle relationships.
- The better I know myself, the better I can communicate with others.
- My creativity is enhanced and given freedom of expression when I am alone.
- When I am alone, the potential for my real feelings is aroused, and this is valuable to my growth.
- I am now willing to discover new insights about myself.
- I can be alone as much or as little as I want to.
- I can achieve growth and self-awareness through solitude.
- Since there is no one exactly like me, I am interesting to myself.

This year, make a beautiful Valentine's Day card, and send it to the most important person in your life – you!

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