

Story Survey Report



The following is an illustrated report outlining the major findings of a survey circulated through The Center for 21st Century Studies (C21)'s Lonely No More! Spring 2022 Program. This survey served as the first attempt at a digital humanities-based participatory research project aligned with a C21 conference: including members of the local, national, and international communities who are part of C21's reach and network.

C21 recorded responses between January 17 – February 28, 2022. The survey was circulated through four major social media outlets (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok) and posted on both the UWM-hosted C21 website and the C21 Interactive Book Club site. The survey was also shared with weekly and monthly C21 listserv emails.

C21 welcomes the circulation of the findings from this survey as a source for inspiration for our Call for Creative Contributions. We encourage schools, community centers, college classrooms, book clubs, and individuals to contribute short stories, poetry, drawings, paintings, craftwork, and/or short audio/visual responses to be considered for our online publications and our digital and physical exhibitions for the Fall 2022 semester.

Demographics

132

Full Responses

258

Interactions Overall

26

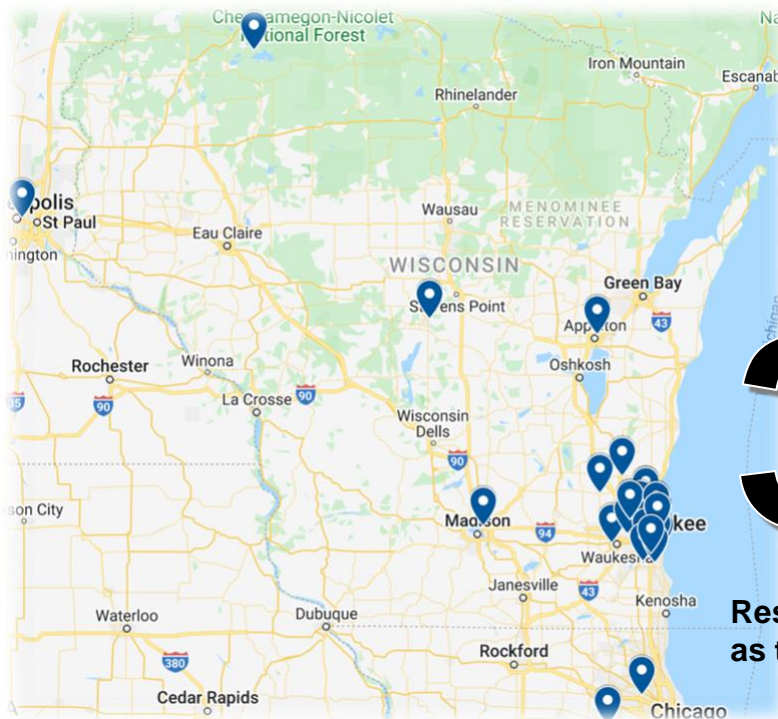
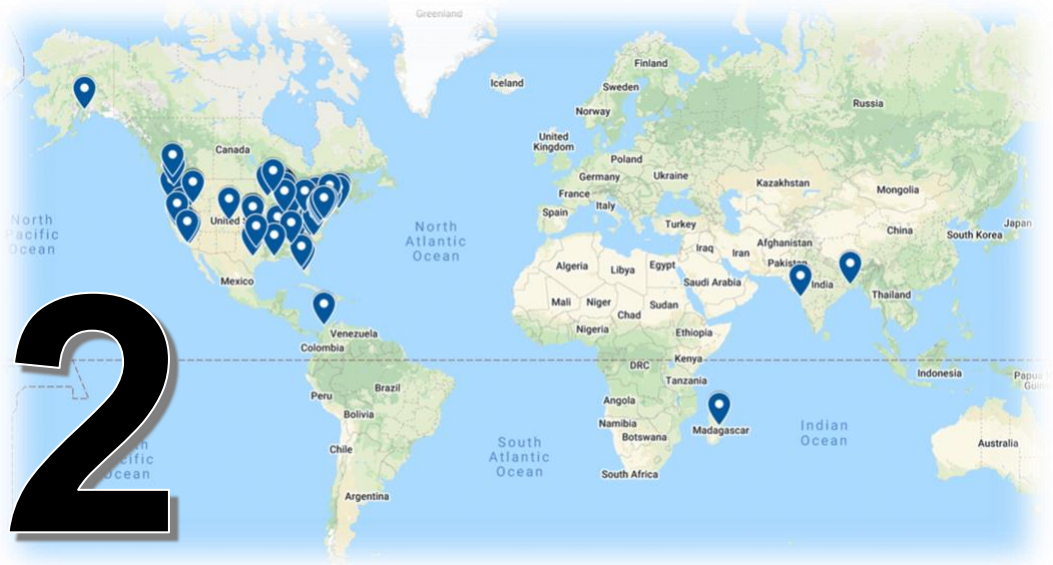
States from the USA

5

Different Countries

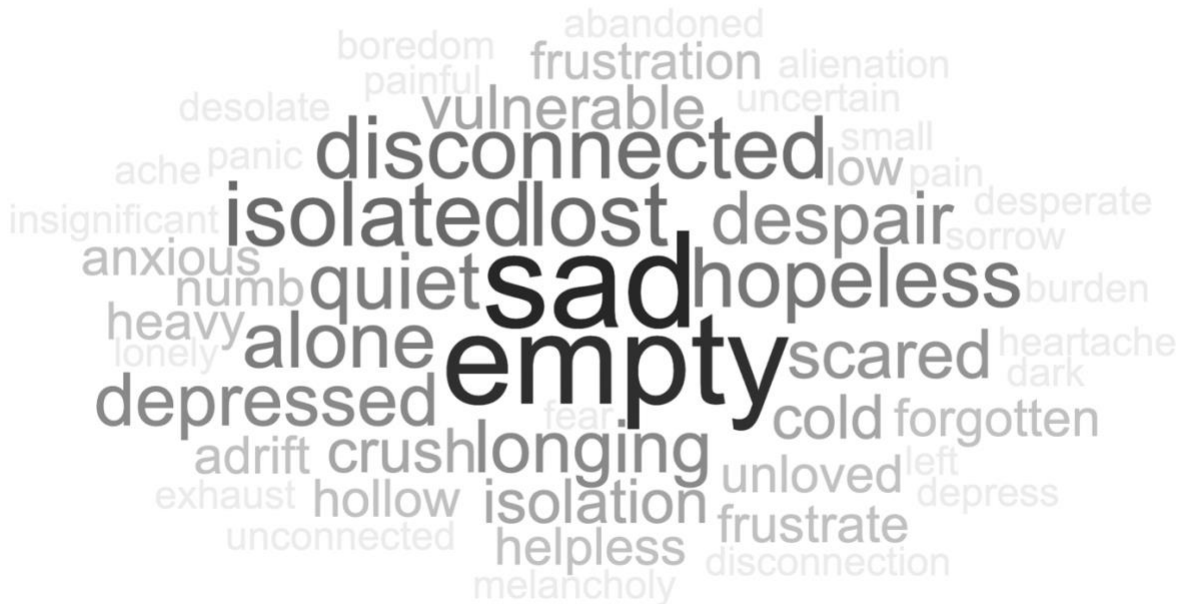
38%

Respondents identified Wisconsin as their place of residence



Words

In describing loneliness, 38% associated loneliness with feeling “sad.” 22% described loneliness as “empty.”



To describe connection, 35% used “warm/warmth” to describe the feeling of connection. 20% used the word “joy.”

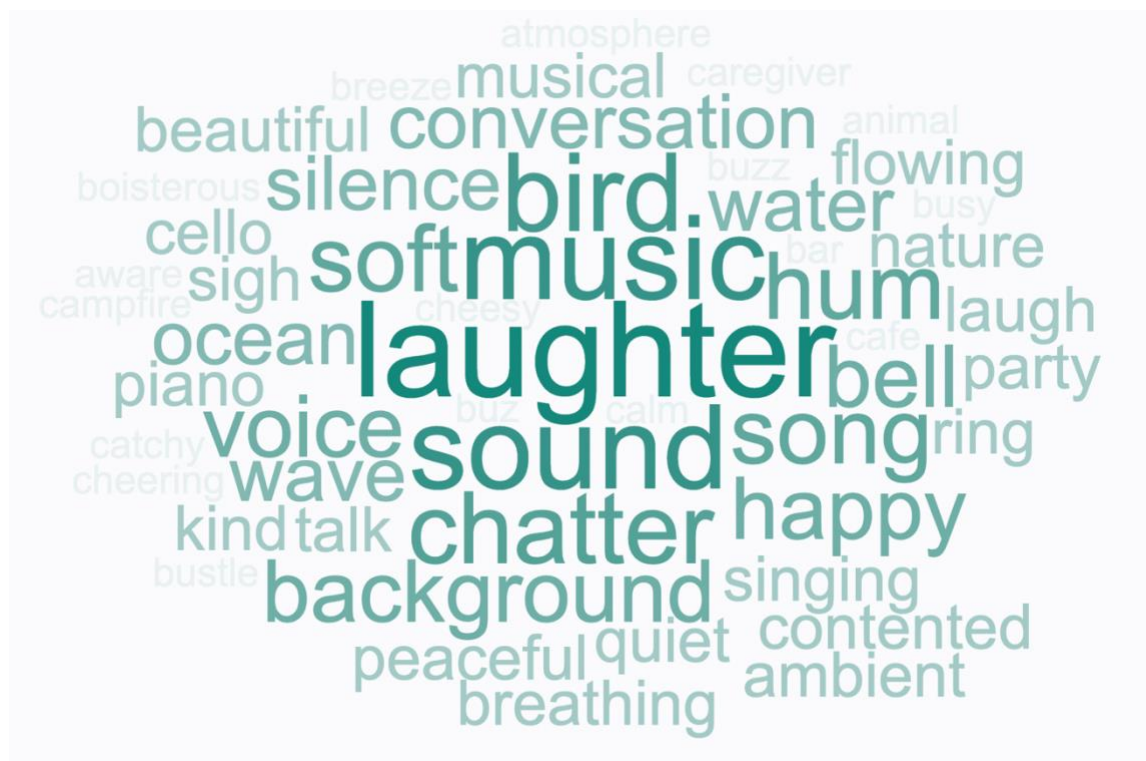


Sounds

Over 28% of respondents associated silence (in various iterations) with loneliness.



Over 17% of respondents aligned the sound of connection with laughter.



Moments and Stories of Loneliness

There was a time I led a seminar section in a classroom and although the room was filled with people, I felt utterly alone as the students stared into their computer screens, gave no eye contact during my set up for the conversation. It felt very isolating in the moment - no shared connection physically or intellectually

When all of my loved ones were too far away.

When I was cut off from my family, homeless, jobless and had falling outs with my friends.

Sitting alone in my cold garret apartment 3000 miles from home, before I had made new friends in the city where I had a new job.

The end of the day sitting on the porch after another day without another human in it. The work of the day was good and honorable and I'll rest good this night. But no sharing will occur.

Lying on my living room floor in Lexington, soon after having moved there. Knew no one well enough there to share feelings, ask for help, or make spontaneous plans together. Desperate for connection, I wondered if I could populate my imagination with friends and dear ones from afar. Rejected that option, worried that imaginary socialization would mentally break me more than its real-life lack. Cried for 2 hours. Feeling too dried out to continue, picked myself up and, red-eyed, went shopping for jeans instead - something to do and people to talk to. Would still rather invent errands or make phone calls than comfort myself with imagination or memories. Truly still worry that would make me go insane and start hearing voices. The sense of being on a mental precipice, easy to push off into abyss of solitary insanity, is worst part of loneliness. Getting in a car, going to the store, chatting to the salespeople - helps feel normally, functionally human again. Loneliness to me is the distilled fear that some day I won't be able to get that external functionality back - stay stuck in my own head forever instead.

I remember sitting alone at home, feeling empty, wondering how I got to this point of no one.

When I was neglected by my partner and co-workers asked what I had planned for the weekend.

Saturday night. Wanting company. No one to turn to and/or no one free to engage

At 2:37 am, awoken by the gentle kick of my son's sleepy legs into my back, I wake up feeling alone, terrified of the future that seems to be unraveling as people lose their ability to "hear" one another, divisiveness rules, and even nature is rebelling against her creations. That was one nighttime's pandemic-fueled journey in late December 2021.

Sometimes feeling lonely is the worst when amongst a group of people with whom I don't connect, feel misunderstood or simply ignored.

Moving out of my home of 20 years and away from my husband of 22 years. Sitting down for the first time a new couch in a new place that will become home.

45 years ago, pushing a baby carriage in a neighborhood where I felt like an alien

After my 13 year old dog passed away, I have felt profound loneliness. No one to come home to. No reason, no purpose- would anyone care.

feeling despair and afraid

Being active and engaged with other people and still feeling I have no one to REALLY listen to ME. Especially numbing inside of a relationship.

Another instance when she found something to distrust, she blocked me. I was to blame for her feelings of self worth, her father. We'd go years without an incident and then one day she'd draw a line in the sand and dismiss me from her life. It included insults that were pure projection. I had no friends, I always lashed out. I was trying to get away with some perceived betrayal, or other transgression. I was shut out and everything she said out of anger cut deep. I felt that sting in my soul. I'm old, I know I scare her because I might die someday and leave her alone. She has always depended on me, and now I can't reach her and her pride won't allow her to offer an apology and get us back on track. I keep telling myself that she will come back to me as soon as she needs money again. I'll be here where she can find me, in the meantime I ache, and the tears choke .

standing alone in a large deserted cross-street

Each week I call my mom living alone and I am reminded by her tone and desire to be with me how lonely she feels. It reminds me how grateful I am for her dog who she adores and sits with all day.
Unfortunately, I think of my father. He was active and gregarious the vast majority of his life, but three things happened late in his life that seemed to turn him into a quiet and often sad man. His hearing diminished greatly, he had a lot of problems with his eyes, and my mother passed away unexpectedly. He was never the same and he either struggled to or became uninterested in connecting with people late in his life. I actually wish I hadn't witnessed that change in him because it didn't seem like my real dad. Loneliness took him away.
Pregnant and alone
Missing out on holding friends' babies. Watching my niece's graduation on Zoom.
a feeling of sadness and shame of not having any friends to call to hang out with on a Friday night
When I was fired from my job, before I called anyone, when I was convinced everyone would see it and me as a failure
I moved abroad when I was 17 by myself. There were times I would sit in my room and feel so strange and foreign. I thought it would be impossible to learn the language and ever feel like I was part of a community again. I missed all the casual conversations you have at stores or waiting for a bus.
late at night when my family has gone to bed and I'm still up but have no one to talk to
Father's funeral while meeting his other family
I mostly think of other people being lonely. I almost never feel lonely but rather, sometimes lonesome.
I think of my Aunt, when she was forgotten or abandoned at the Girl Scout cabin when she was twelve
After my child was born, I felt overwhelming loneliness. I was never alone, and actually, my body was constantly being tugged at and surrounded. But I felt completely and utterly alone in a way I had never before. I felt sure no one in the world understood me or how I felt.
I think of my elderly, widowed mother, who has had been along during most of Covid
looking out a window at other people being connected
I think of the time I pushed my wife away, thinking I would burden her with my problems.
An older individual sitting in an armchair alone and not engaged in any activity.
Making Christmas cookies alone and missing my mom's presence
Yes. Just the fact I'm not a great friend. I become anxious and worry which causes me to often cancel plans. I also say stupid stuff.
When I did five months of trail work with AmeriCorps. I was backpacking & living/working with the same five people. I missed my friends, family, boyfriend (now husband).
I have felt loneliness in navigating the healthcare system and identifying ranging forms of support when my father was dying. I wasn't literally alone, but the world was moving faster than I could manage. I struggled with securing resources, meeting demands of work and family, and having the bandwidth to be mindful, present and physically "there" during his transition. .
When I hear the word mentioned, I often think back to my childhood when I was ignored by classmates as a form of bullying. I lost my dad to cancer when I was six and I was already a bit quiet and sensitive because of this and it made me an easy target. Years later, I found out that many of those classmates who excluded me from their social circles were going through family crises of their own. It was a very difficult time in my life and it was the loneliest time by far.
I was always with people-- spouse, family, community. Now I am not
After a great heartbreak.
I feel lonely when I'm experiencing an illness or medical problem.
when my mother was alone in the hospital and i was not allowed to visit her and she died - i was with her in the last half hour but she was unconscious and then she passed away
When i had lost custody of my very young children, the next few months were tough even doing basic chores like bathing n dressing up for work. Eating anything tasty meant few hours of guilt. Smiling at a colleagues or friends joke piled up the guilt.
When I moved out of state for my first "real job" out of college, my Dad and a friend drove out with me to help me move. When they were pulling out of the driveway to head back to WI, I cried, feeling sorry for myself, unsure

about the future ahead for me. I didn't know anyone in my new space, didn't have a community. I did eventually feel like I had made some friends, but left that job/community within a year. I have been writing about moving like this for work as a function of whiteness, of self-alienation required for participating in capitalism, in academia, that I needed to leave my rural hometown and extended family in order to get a "real job", in order to get a "good education". These structures ask too much of all of us, especially marginalized communities.

Leaving Las Vegas

Crying, Roy Orbison

I think a lot of film. I tend to think in images, so film frames come to mind. I think of the scene from Encounters at the End of the World where they are filming under the ice, and a single diver floats around in the blue among the sea creatures <https://youtu.be/6BB3YRtzRxE?t=2970>

when I was in a hospital after a car accident in my hometown.

Days in a row without being in physical presence of another

On a solo visit to Zion National Park, watching friends together and families having a good time

Various times I've gone camping, alone of course.

THE EERIE QUIET OF BEING ALONE, NO ONE TO SHARE STORY OR LAUGHTER WITH

It's not so much a story, but a scene and a feeling. Being in a room full of people appearing to have fun and laughing and looking around at them convinced none of them want to talk to you. Then saying something witty and brilliant that makes them all laugh and never believing for a moment that any of them really like you.

as a child, when my mother hit me for no reason, screamed

the night I knew my husband's death was imminent

Loss of people I love; grief after loss of my husband and my sister; feelings of no longer belonging to a larger presence

In high school Spanish class, the kids around me spitting on me and me sitting numbly so I didn't cry because it felt like it would never stop and this is what the world thinks of me.

Sitting alone at my work from home desk. Cobbling together a lecture to deliver to a screen of muted black boxes. Scrolling through academic twitter and hating it.

I had a teacher once tell me that all plays are about loneliness - finding where you belong (or not finding it)

I have lived alone for more than 25 years, so I didn't think I really got lonely until the pandemic began. To be honest, the isolation of the pandemic is not much different from the isolation of living alone with a chronic illness. I am used to *being* alone - you could even say I'm good at it - so in many ways I was prepared for this mass experience of pandemic isolation. But there have been times during the pandemic that I have felt such a deep painful loneliness that it surprised me, because it was a feeling that I had never experienced before.

When I was 15 I lived in a house with one parent who was never home and another parent who never could figure out how to be there in an unobtrusive way. I would spend hours after school in my room spinning in my own head. So scared to be alone with my thoughts but being held hostage by that fear to the point that you're immobilized by that fear.

It's the feeling that no one "gets" you. My favorite description of attunement is "the sense of being seen, being heard, feeling felt and getting gotten". Loneliness is the opposite of that.

When my son goes to visit his dad, there's no noise, no hussle and bussle, no 'mom, where are my shoes?', no hugs, no face to face I love you's, no tuck in's or someone who depends on me. I feel useless sometimes. I'm in a house alone wondering if I made a mistake. If I should've stayed so I wouldn't feel so lonely. Should I have just dealt with it? I know the answer is no, but it sometimes weighs heavy on my mind.

The idea of missing/wanting a person I can look up to in my life

When I know I'm right about something (especially my feelings towards a situation of humiliation/abuse), but nobody believes me.

Feeling like I couldn't talk to my friends about a difficult time in my life, like they weren't interested

When I first moved to Texas in 2013, I had no job, no school, and so it was several month period of alternating quiet and frustration/anger in smaller, more mundane things.

Feelings of abandonment and neglect during my childhood.

A new years party a few years ago. I did not fit in with my old (young) friend group anymore and was single, so I didn't fit in with the married friends either
I remember at time when I was caught between two decisions. Most of my friends/family were living in other cities but the most isolating and lonely part was the feeling that it was something I couldn't really ask for help with. It made me feel incredibly alone.
After my divorce, I had lost my best friend and when he left he took several of our friends with him. I remember trying to go through my phone one night to call somebody. Every contact that I looked at I had a reason why I couldn't call them. At the end of my 300 contacts I realized that I really didn't have anybody.
Had a feeling of loneliness when my children moved away.
Recently divorced and without my children
The Little Prince
When I'm not with my significant other
Lost in addiction to opioids
Long drives with no company
I feel and have felt loneliness every day for many years. I particularly feel lonely, though, when friends / colleagues celebrate their successes with family members. The idea that you could ever call you mother, feel protected by your father, or laugh with your brother is foreign to me and has never been a part of my life. I would love if someone reached out and was proud of me at significant moments of my life. I've been about to celebrate them my own, but I wish that I could share the happiness of getting my PhD, getting a book contract, or conquering other demons with someone else.
Sitting in my room when I'm 16 and my parents invite me to go with them to the beach for the day, and I decide to stay home by myself and regret not going with them.
Sitting alone on deployments
My first panic attack. It felt like there was nothing and no one to reach out to for help.
After many job rejections and living in a town where I knew nobody, I felt like I was failing at everything and nobody could help me and I had no one to turn to. All my friends seemed to accomplish these things so easily and I felt left behind and like I would lose my friend group as well as my income.
When grown kids left home for college.
After the death of my Father
Im usually lonely, so, story of my life
It's less a moment, and more a pressing need to emphasize the difference between "lonely" and "alone." The loneliest I have felt was never when I was physically alone, but when I was around other people but unable to connect or be seen or cared for.
There was a time a couple of years ago where loneliness had grabbed a hold of me to the point I did not want to live anymore.
Being told I wasn't good enough for someone to love
Wheni was going through my divorce and sat at home alone and had a feeling of despair
End of a long day, coming home to no one, eating alone, tried watching TV but. I thing could hold my attention. Turned off the TV and set there in the dark. The longer I set there, the more empty and helpless I felt, broke down crying because this was all my life had led to and all it seemed to ever going to be. When the tears dried up, I went to bed and stared at the ceiling until finally drifting off to sleep.
Living to England and having no friends and regular cultural touch points to connect on. It was difficult, for the friends I tried to make and myself, to connect without being able to share commonalities from our lives because they were so different. .
Thinking about how many people close to me have died and that longing you have to connect with them again, but know you can't really. Sometimes it's wanting to just pick up the phone then realizing they're not there anymore. Loneliness sometimes feels like grief and loss.
A breakup
Curled up in bed, fetal position, crying silent tears
Dealing with my alcoholic husband made me feel veey lonely

Loneliness is that first morning after a relationship ends when you realize all over again that the person you thought you'd be spending time with isn't in your life anymore and you need to adjust your plans.
Break up, disconnection with people and or surroundings
Honestly, I rarely feel lonely; If Ever
Moving to a new city by myself in my own apartment
Feeling like you have no one to confide in
When both of my parents died, I felt some loneliness. I can't really say that I suffer from loneliness though.
Silence
Weekend nights with no one available to talk, running out the clock until bed
I have not felt loneliness in some time. In the past, it was most acute when I was closely thrown in with people who had different values and habits and I felt lonely for someone who would see me and share my sense of things..... It was a feeling of disconnection. Example: feeling alone/ disoriented during a long immersive research project in graduate school where people were thinking of me as very straitlaced (not smoking pot with them) and too serious about my work and acted very exclusionary or so I felt. I was 2000 miles from home and trying to find my own comfortable group, which I eventually did, but the sting of loneliness is quite vivid still.
At an earlier time in my life, my children had just left for their father's for an extended visit out of state. In my sleep, I walked off of my basement stairs and awoke in a pool of my own blood. As I recovered, I was struck by the fact that, had I been more seriously injured, no one would have found me for 10 days, and I would have remained at the bottom of the stairs for that time. It was the most alone i have ever felt and brought with it a determination to find a significant other, so at least someone would expect to hear from me daily.
When I moved to a new city for school, it was really hard to make connections right away. That eventually changed, but for the first few months I spent a lot of time alone, focused on school but not doing anything else. It was a very isolated time in my life, but out of it I grew to enjoy solitude as a balance to other, more hectic parts of my life.
I would describe it as laying next to someone you love, and bring in the house with someone you love and cherish, but they do not reciprocate.

Sharing a meal with a good friend
Time spent in a mutual situation with a loved one
Being with the people I care most about.
When my fiancé and I can sit next to each other and be equally comfortable having deep conversations or just sitting in silence together.
Sitting alone on a steep hillside in sub-Saharan Africa, watching dawn approach over the wakening village below.
Family gathered for whatever time of celebration with lots of stories, food and drink
The countless times I've met someone new and felt that "click" of shared experience or understanding. The many raucous parties I've hosted when different friend groups can cross-fertilize. Not just me to connecting to others but making an environment where others can with each other - truly one of my greatest joys.
Sitting on the seashore with my sisters. Our grown children are all there playing in the waves, lying on the beach reading. WE just sat and quietly looked at all we grew and nurtured.
When I have performed poetry and I can feel that I have reached someone.
A dinner party. I'm the host. Great food and company.
Our 8 year old son awoke at 1 am to use the rest room, came back and snuggled into the bed with me, entwining legs within legs, nuzzling heads into my chest, his warmth radiating through my body. Silence, only rhythmic breathing, the rise and fall of our chests.
I feel especially connected usually on-on-one, talking about some aspect of the world or human experience, and the other person puts my thoughts into words. This is one way I knew my husband was for me.
Travelling with a best friend in Northern California, stopping for oysters along the seaside and basking in the sunshine while having amazing conversations and dreaming about the future
Doing TimeSlips with folks having advanced dementia
When someone understands you for who you are and accepts you. They listen, love you, empathize with no judgement.
conversation that's a mutual exchange
An unexpected Turn call from a friend/ family
Anytime I've sat down with my loose box of ideas and another person's bag of ideas and -after some spitbaling and shuffling, we land on a hybrid idea that we both like. Especially over coffee or a meal!
It got really late and the call had not come when we were told it would. It rolled through as thunder and lightning, but when that spread out across the lake the rain continued. The call came, I had to convince her not to come with me, I knew how to get there. She had been drinking all night, insisted that she drive. I left without her, drove across thirty fifth, past the ballpark, over to California, past the County lockup, still raining hard. I was driving a used Ford Explorer, sticky all over the front flooring like someone spilled a soda and half the planet got stuck there. He waved, in the crowd of men milling about I could see him as he stepped into the street. He was still wearing just a basketball jersey, no coat, just what he was arrested in. He had been in Cook County for over a month, and released on a signature bond. As soon as he got into the front seat he reached over and hugged his old man so hard.
many moments with friends
I think about the many times I have "caught up" with friends from college over coffee or a meal, and how the time could go on and on.
The beautiful and rare ease of spending completely care-free time with my sisters.
Having friends in my kitchen and eating at my table
When I would spend a night at a friend's house, every morning when I would wake up I would crawl in bed with them and we would chat and joke and laugh all morning.

even just a brief laugh or connection with someone
Hugging family I haven't seen in years
The first image that comes to mind is sitting in my mom's lap as a little boy.
walking to and from the office with a particular friend who I think experiences the world similarly to the way I do; it's a simple thing, but I can feel my shoulders relax and my brain perk up, and just a general sense of kinship with this person.
I remember the first time I actually connected with my baby. We were lying on a bed and she was looking into my eyes. I suddenly realized that I was her momma and I wanted to be.
Sharing a laugh with someone on an elevator, holding the door for someone, small things like that
any situation where I'm in a group that is working together toward a common goal
I think of Christmastime with my in-laws.
Children holding hands in a circle, playing ring-around-the-rosy, laughing, and all falling down together in a contented heap.
This is a time that I hope I'll always remember because it was so random and so memorable - I was at a festival, and walking through an arts and crafts area. The day was sunny and there were lots of people but it wasn't packed. The sun was out and people were really enjoying themselves. For some reason I got this awe-filled, overwhelming feeling of connection to everyone around me. It was like a veil was lifted and I understood how connected we all are as humans living in this world. Not separate.
The first time I met my BFF
Shopping with my family and having so much fun!
When my husband & I talk through our feelings & misunderstandings
I think of encounters... and introduction or reunion... of someone or a place.
Cuddling my baby
The word connectedness reminds me of times when I was with groups of family, friends, or coworkers. I remember feeling at my best in those moments. In those memories I feel like I am exactly where I am supposed to be and that I am doing exactly what I should be doing. Connectedness is at the core of who I am and everything feels right in those moments.
Serving others who have great and serious needs
coffeeshops come to mind
Reuniting with a close friend I haven't seen in years
Being in a circle. Whether dancing, talking or sharing food.
Having breakfast with my girlfriend in her kitchen
day in and out, I have moments of connectedness when my wife, friends, family, colleagues feel that we are connected, and grateful for not being alone, not fighting alone
Meeting grandson in person, holding him, singing with praying with him - seeing his smile in person - holding his hand and running in circles - too good - absolute vanilla joy and bliss - Met friends after 6 months during covid lockdown - just looking at them - washing vigorously to touch n hug them was so soul satisfying. Sharing favourite foods and talking about day to day matters became more joyful. The feeling of warmth was around for a few days.
I worked with several people developing local food systems in rural Colorado with other people who were not from there. Some came because of AmeriCorps, some were affiliated with a college, others were activists. As I type this I realize how ridiculous and fabricated this sense of belonging is--how could we belong to a place we were visiting? A place indigenous people did not continuously inhabit due to harsh weather and seasonal absence drought. But we felt like we were doing good things, making a food co-op, buying land for a farm park, teaching fermentation workshops. Our love of food united us, and we self-identified as do-gooders. We were all white ladies, from relatively privileged backgrounds, college-educated. We saw ourselves in each other and felt like we were making a difference together. The moment I'm remembering is a trip four of us made to a natural hot spring on private property that someone knew the owner and got us permission. Some of us were leaving the area to move elsewhere (eventually we all left CO) and we were saying good bye--ironically the good bye trip is memorable as a moment when I felt connected to them.
Connecting in a good way, reminds me of the paradigm of several people elevating each other to the point of invisibility shared in the book 'the Celestine prophesy'

It feels a little cliché, really. The binary of lonely/connected is a difficult one; the contrast might be too stark for me. It's a little sad to think of a time when you felt connected because it makes you feel like you're outside of that circuit of connection.
everytime I meet with my small reading group every Friday.
Sitting with family members in an ordinary way and catching up after weeks of not being together
Celebrating a birthday with my nearest and dearest, some of whom came from out of town to celebrate with me, and singing pop songs and songs from musicals together
Being taken away from my creative juices to be around people. Any holiday.
A RECENT ZOOM A NEW BUSINESS PARTNER + I LEARNED OF MANY SKILLS WE HAVE IN COMMON + BRAINSTORMED SOME GREAT IDEAS
Often late at night when I am alone and working on the local ice skating rink, I feel a connection created by having a something to do that gives others joy and value.
dancing
meeting a friend on a third plane of mutual understanding
Family, art making, friendship, community, laughter
Being on stage at a venue during a performance feeling like I felt happy to be there and understanding what I was communicating.
having zoom tea with a friend
I immediately think of community - peace gardens, grassroots efforts, getting out the vote
the unmitigated, shared joy of seeing and hugging a friend after a long absence
Being held, falling asleep as they pet my hair
I remember sitting around a campfire in the wilderness with half a dozen other people who had paddled canoes through rain for 6+ hours. We finally got to campsite and got a fire going to make supper. We all sat as close to the fire as we could and ate. We were all cold and hungry but all together and we all knew that none of us were miserable alone. And we all knew that we would be laughing about it later.
Coming together as a family during holidays, birthdays, or other family gatherings
The moments that remind me of connectedness are when I'm with family or friends having fun and not thinking about troubles and just enjoying the moment.
Installing Telegram on my phone and re-connecting with friends abroad and leaving frequent voice messages. I didn't know we were still so close, but this little bit of technology made it possible.
Playing board games with family/friends
Bonding with a supervisor at work over our shared experience of ADHD
Working closely with a horse or after having a heart to heart with a person
Generalized talking in a cozy pub with friends
Moments when I feel incredibly close with my wife and children. Usually involves a very good hug.
I don't really have one story about feeling connected. To me. Feeling connected is about being calm with someone else.
Playing with my Granddaughter or keeping in contact with my children
Church worship
The La Vie Bohème cafe scene in rent
When on vacation
Someone I met a long time ago, who is now gone
Church fellowship
Playing a team sport
I rarely feel connected to people and have been working on it for a long time. At this point, I only feel truly connected to others when I'm intoxicated on some level and am able to get out of my own head. When I'm sober, I don't feel like I'm worth connection.
dancing with anyone - my husband at night when friends have gone and we dance cheek to cheek to music
Coming home from deployment to see family
The first time I nursed my son after he was born.

Spending time with my friend who I had not seen in years while I was house sitting by myself in New York City. We shared our newfound mutual interests in spiritual and mystical traditions band caught up on our families and friends.
Gathering with long time friends where it feels like you havent been apart very long, but its been a year.
When my law enforcement partner and I survived a deadly incident together
I think mutual aid during our last winter storm
I volunteer with a nonprofit that helps military and first responders veterans with PTSD and physical disabilities sustained on duty. We have an amazing community - one that helped save my life.
Making new friends or acquaintances with similar interests.
Hugs from my grandma
Out with friends having fun
Post dinner with friends, sitting at a table with now empty wine glasses and plates, talking warming well into the evening. Warm hugs at the door as we say goodbye.
Family parties (thanksgiving, Christmas, etc)
Coming home from work to a house with my loved one inside. We sit and chat about our day before getting started with dinner.
Any time with my children
Connectedness is that moment where you're in a group of people and realize that you can and have had individual conversations with everyone. You aren't afraid to be yourself or to offer yourself up to others.
Being with family/friends
My career working in the public sector
Memories of playing sports with teammates or playing music in a band
Having dinner with family friends every Sunday and still seeing the "Sunday dinner club crew" every time you go home to visit
Looking into the eyes of a loved one and just being still together
Being with family at holiday parties
Relationship with Jesus
The group being at the siblings' playing with the twins and sharing stories about our childhood
I mostly work/ write alone since retirement from teaching. I felt and still feel a huge burst of connectedness and happiness when I joined a small group of five people total working, now over two years, together towards a common goal in animal advocacy. I have felt connection for 32 years with my husband at home, but had been missing a sense of professional connection,
At Christmas, with all of my kids back in the house, visiting, interacting and loving each other and me, i feel connected like no other time. They are grown and have their own lives, so these times are rare and therefore priceless
The times I have felt most connected is when I am working with people. I've held several customer service type jobs and you really bond with people through the shared frustrations of those types of jobs. It becomes a big part of your social circle and you create long-lasting friendships even outside of those industries.
Happy moments in relationships, where you can't get enough of each other, and there aren't enough hours in the day

Stories

Strategies for Loneliness Relief

22%

Call a Friend

16%

Listen to Music

14%

Take a Walk

Time will pass
I will make phone calls, play video games, and go out somewhere.
Communicate with loved ones, watch movies/listen to music,
Listen to music, play with pets, take a nap.
I get busy. Household chores or projects like painting, knitting
Phone calls with friends/family from afar. Long walks to solidly root myself in place, connecting with an inhabited world if not people in it. Inventing "busy work" like errands. Cry it out. If I can't call, write long emails or journal entries. Exercise or the outdoors. Expand answers to the question: what am I connecting TO, and how? Doesn't have to be people for it to assuage the isolation. Connecting to place, plants (I spent weeks daily visiting my favorite tree and feeling its peeling bark), the wind, moon, the shared material of existence - all of this helped when Covid-19 made people interactions dangerous. Once I cried on my rooftop - my evaporated tears joined the water cycle that nourishes us all. I think about all these material elemental interactions and it helps. Connection even in solitude.
a walk, a call to others, food, sleep
I try to enjoy a sense of solitude, and connectedness is preferable for me. Rubbing my dogs belly helps me.
I write or walk
Playing a musical instrument. Sometimes solitude can be beautiful.
I acknowledge, out loud, in written words, in my head, or a combination, "Oh! I'm feeling lonely (scared, sad, frustrated). That's understandable. Look at what's going on...(list all the things, worries, etc). It's ok. It's normal to have all those feelings." I connect to the feeling which grounds me.
Being in nature, tuning in to the vastness of the universe, or listening to music that I love helps me move to a sense of solitude. Calling a friend that is especially and consistently warm, nurturing, nonjudgmental is one way to move towards connectedness. Or being friendly or generous to strangers (like a barista or someone standing in line if I'm out and about).
deep breathing, meditation, walking in nature, poetry, visiting a cafe, gardening, calling a friend
I give myself time to grieve or feel the sadness. I usually pick myself up by reaching out to friends.
Try to blast myself out of that place by connecting with very old people
Exercise, meditate, cry, call someone, watch puppy videos, cook, read, focus on a goal
Find something to do that I like (art, reading, music) or get in touch with someone
Turn on TV, radio, call a friend, go for a walk,
Make something or watch a movie
I might call a friend, there are actually lots of them scattered all over the nation. Old friends, some fifty years on. How many people can say that? But it's just a device, call, text, it's dehumanizing. I have access to all the media a person can have, I can lose myself reading, or watching a film. When I finally go to my bed I prop up my knees, lying on my back, head raised slightly. I recite a mantra, a prayer, I am.
alcohol? Youtube? Netflix? :-)
When I am lonely I don't always seek people out to interact with, but rather just being in the presence of people on a walk or at a movie
Read or listen to music
Listen to music, watch YouTube videos on random topics of interest

Wallow, lean into the feeling, go outside,
Reach out to people I miss, or do something I enjoy in solitude (reading, exercising).
call or plan a date with a friend, pray or meditate with self-love and compassion
Read a book, call a friend, be with people I love
If I can reach out to friends I will or I would perhaps listen to music I love or read a book I've already read.
Watch T.V., do emails, go on Facebook, hangv out with cats or kids
Bury that lonely feeling then realize I am not truly alone
I remember that in this universe I am never out of connection with everything else.
seek connection - reach out to friends via text; walks with my dog; I write in a journal occasionally; reading - but that is often after my feelings have improved and it's always immensely helpful, if the book is good (not so much if it's a clunker)
I force myself to tell someone I trust, even though I don't want to. Loneliness always comes with a little shame or embarrassment for me, so I normally have a gut reaction to hide it. But whenever I feel like I should hide I try to remember that hiding does not work for me.
I don't always relieve it, sometimes I sit in it and feel it. Or I'll relieve by chatting up my wife, taking a walk
text someone, remind myself of the people in my life who care about me
Talk openly about my feelings with my wife, play games online with friends, write poetry
Read - joining others by accessing their words, ideas, and perspectives. Write cards to loved ones to send lines of connection outward. Talk to children.
I try to think of the real connections I have with people. I will also use thing to distract me - like reading a book, looking through photos, or turning to social media or screen time - so, look for a distraction. I may also try to reach out to someone in real life - a call, a letter, etc.
Read a book or listen to a podcast, or reach out to a friend by phone
Sleep, read, watch tv
I journal, spend time with mysf to reflect on why I'm feeling the way I'm feeling. Then, I call my sister.
I see both as entwined. I suppose, I practice patience.
Reach out, call, or just feel it.
To relieve feelings of loneliness, I usually turn to books, songs, tv or movies. Surrounding myself with stories of people alleviates the feeling of loneliness. It makes me feel connected again.
I cry. Sometimes I take a nap. I say to myself I will do and be good, that's all I can do.
Visit a coffeeshop (effective), take a nap (ineffective)
READ
I sleep or find something to keep me busy
Reach put to a friend or famiy member. Do something of or self-care, such as beng in nature. Swimming, walking
Call a friend for support.
speak to my wife, listen to Sufi songs, go for a nature run
Hot chocolate or hot filter coffee - research and read up on favourite topics - play sudoku
Now, especially after these first two years of the pandemic, I've adjusted my sense of being alone and being together. I'm grateful for zoom and phone calls being ways to keep up with people. I'm a writer, so I'm glad for quiet time to think and write. I'm grateful to have my partner--this time has been terrifying at moments, and I'm so glad to be facing them with another person. My feelings about climate change and ruggedizing our communities, our food systems, transportation, education, health, give me motivation to seek out ways to show up for people already doing the work, starting with mutual aid, and growing from there. There is always work to do, and I need to show up ready to care for others and do the work.
Meditate, yoga, hike
Drink. work out , meditate
See others
Move, or focus on sensation. Walk outside, especially in the cold. Observe. Write. Hold an ice cube in my hand until it melts.
talk to someone I know, meet them if possible

Reading good literature or current research reports and putting myself mentally alongside the character or scientist
Remind myself that loneliness is a temporal feeling, it is not my identity
Paint or write.
MEDITATE, LOOK AT PICTURES OF PAST VACATIONS / SPENDING TIME WITH FRIENDS
breathing exercises, call a friend to hear their voice, hold my pet to ground self in connection
The best thing I do is force myself to either see my friends, preferably in a one on one, or commit to doing something where others are counting on me.
play music
remember times of connectedness, count my blessings, read poetry, journal, listen to music I like, watch a favorite movie,
Move toward the healing strengths of being alone in solitude
I write without pausing to think, let it come out until I understand what's behind the feeling — once it makes sense, life is no longer confusing, alarming or hopeless.
Read novels, go for walks, run, distract myself somehow
bad habit: scroll social media. Better coping skill: pick up the phone and actually call someone, esp. my sister
I use social media to reach out, or set up video calls or outings with a friend. Or I fill myself spiritually, with nature, or art - go to a museum or take a drawing class and make something to share with others.
Distraction, physical contact, creating a network of friends that understand and occasionally reach out to check on each other.
I breathe and remember. I remind myself that I am connected in ways that are not always obvious but are always true. I go outside and find connection in the natural world.
I recently adopted a kitten from the shelter. It has made an impact for sure. She requires my time and attention and it takes my mind off of those days where I'd otherwise be sitting in a room, alone no sound on around me.
I try to relax and think about if what I'm feeling can be fixed and if cant just try to distract myself till I forget about it
I eat chocolate, which isn't the most productive choice, I guess. I also re-watch TV shows because it's like re-connecting with old friends.
Listen to music, find an activity that distracts me
Find a way to get re-centered. Either reading and drinking tea, or talking to a friend
Typically I message friends about playing games
My distinction between loneliness and solitude is whether or not it is welcome. I often seek solitude deliberately, as an opportunity to read, create art, or recharge.
Listen to comforting, uplifting music, intentionally spend time with my nuclear family
Eat and spend time with family
Take a walk in a park or go to the pub if I want to feel more connected, walk in the woods if I want to feel more solitude
Usually seek out trusted friends for communication. It doesn't even have to be immediate communication. It could be the promise of getting together in the new couple of days can be enough to bring back a sense of connection. (not sure solitude is the word I would choose though, maybe solidarity)
I reach out to new friends or I take time for self-care and see or go on a trip or read or anything to just distract my head for a while.
Keep myself busy.
Music, fresh air & sunshine, creativity
Hold my baby
Try to hang around good people
Cry, no relief
Reach out for help
Call someone on the phone
Therapy, therapy, therapy
I look at my phone and realize how many people I've talked with lately or met recently or plan to see soon.
Working out

I get to my animals and pet them.
I call a friend; spend quality time with my partner; go on a walk in nature
Call a friend.
Change the current situation and do something different to release my attention on the lonely feeling.
Sleep
Call a friend of family member
Given up
I just take my ass back to work because I cant afford shit
I try to connect via mutual aid and activist work as well as reaching out to my close friends and my church
I call my mom. Anytime, anywhere, I know she is the one person who will always be happy to be on the other end of that call. And I am so afraid of the day when she'll be gone.
I do yoga, listen to worship music or I will reach out to someone I know that will offer me love and support.
Listen to music, contact people who can help or listen.
I isolate from others, close off social media, turn off my phone and watch movies or listen to rock music.
Call a friend. Go for a walk with the dog
Read books. Fly fishing. Cook for others.
Purposefully try to reach out to a friend or loved one by sending them a message letting them know I am thinking of them or just generally asking how they are
Wait for it to pass.
The problem is, you do the exact opposite of what you need. You isolate yourself. I did push myself to date and am so glad I did. I found my love
Connect with family
When I feel lonely, I reach out to people I know I can count on, or watch TV/read a book/go on social media to observe and connect with others (even if they don't know about it.)
Exercise, reach out to family/friends
Call someone, anyone and that leads to other things/activities
Listen to music
Listen to music, do yoga, watch TV, read a book
I try to seek a community, if not in real life then online
Call a friend or family
Prayer, praise and actions
I dive into video games rather than reach out to people I don't normally text. Ride the wave of solitude toward sleep, when I can be solo productive again
read and lose myself in another world, write out my feelings for myself, write a friend, go into nature/ be with animals
Call my kids or my friends
Its hard for me to relieve the feelings without letting myself fall deeply into them. I used to simply push them aside, but loneliness has a way of growing just beneath the surface. Instead, confronting them and trying to figure out why I am feeling that way allows me to see a way out of that darkness. Reaching out to friends can help, but does not typically get to the root of the problem.
Go outside, social media, watch a scary movie, text my boyfriend or best friend, shopping, drinking
Get out of the house, find something to do, tackle a project
distractions are playing on-line connected role-play game, read, puzzles

APPENDIX

Research Questions

1. Please share your city and state
2. In a moment you have felt loneliness... what three words might describe that feeling?
3. In a moment you have felt loneliness...what is the color of that feeling?
4. In a moment you have felt loneliness...what is the sound of that feeling?
5. If someone says "loneliness," does a particular moment or story come to mind when you might have felt this? Please share that story / description here.
6. In a moment when you feel "connectedness" - what three words might describe that feeling?
7. In a moment when you feel connectedness - what is the color of that feeling?
8. In a moment when you feel connectedness - what sound of that feeling?
9. If someone says "connectedness," does a particular moment or story come to mind when you might have felt this? Please share that story / description here.
10. When you have feelings of loneliness, what are things you do to relieve them? And perhaps move toward a sense of solitude, or of connectedness?

Accompanying Resources

National Institute on Aging - Loneliness and Social Isolation Tips

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/loneliness-and-social-isolation-tips-staying-connected>

Healthline Loneliness Support (2019)

<https://www.healthline.com/health/how-to-deal-with-loneliness>

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Let's Talk Program

<https://uwm.edu/norris/counseling/lets-talk/>