Why it's good to be lonely this Valentine's Day

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Whilst it may seem that there are no positives to draw from feeling lonely, several authors have shown that this is not the case.

In the article 'Evolutionary mechanisms for loneliness', from the journal *Cognition & Emotion*, authors John T. Cacioppo, Stephanie Cacioppo & Dorret I. Boomsma explore how people in 'happy' relationships negatively view the lonely but suggest that loneliness in fact promotes an individual's genetic survival.

The authors report that the 'lonely' are viewed more negatively in terms of their psychosocial functioning and attractiveness. In a social environment non-lonely people form a negative impression towards lonely people, which then affects their behaviour and reinforces the lonely individual's perceived isolated existence. Furthermore, individuals rated opposite-gender partners who they expected to be lonely as less sociable, and behaved towards them in a less sociable manner than they did toward partners they expected not to be-lonely.

But despite the negativity towards lonely people, there is good news for those feeling glum this Valentine's Day. Although it may feel like loneliness has no redeeming features, it promotes behavior change to increase the likelihood of the survival of one's genes.

Therefore loneliness is not so much a dysfunctional reaction as it is about promoting an individual's genetic legacy.

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More information: Evolutionary mechanisms for loneliness. John T. Cacioppo, Stephanie Cacioppo & Dorret I. Boomsma. *Cognition & Emotion*, Volume 28, Issue 1, 2014. DOI: 10.1080/02699931.2013.837379

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