

Being alone and socializing with others each contributes differently to personal growth

November 19 2020



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How do people experience time alone and time with others? Findings from a new Bar-Ilan University study reveal the intricacies of people's experiences in these basic social conditions.

The study used a unique approach of analyzing self-generated text from more than 1,700 participants who performed a sentence-completion task regarding their experience alone and their [social experience](#) when in the company of others. This approach shed light on people's perceptions when free to express themselves without being bound to specific questions.

The results of the study, just published in the journal *Social Psychology*, showed that when people think about themselves with others, they are more focused on the present, and less focused on the past or the future than when they think about themselves alone. Furthermore, when with others, more anxiety and anger, but less sadness, are expressed than when alone.

Time alone is reflected in people's thoughts as an opportunity to think about [past experiences](#) and future plans, to relax from the stress of social interactions, and to engage in self-selected leisure activities.

"Being alone and being with others are represented in people's minds as qualitatively different experiences, each contributing to the formation of an integrated self," says Dr. Liad Uziel, of the Department of Psychology at Bar-Ilan University, who conducted the study. "One needs a combination of constructive alone and social experiences, as each type of social setting contributes much-needed, unique advantages" he adds.

For those facing current lockdowns alone, Uziel says the present findings, which highlight potential constructive effects of time alone, indicate that this could also be an opportunity for personal growth.

More information: Liad Uziel, The Language of Being Alone and Being With Others, *Social Psychology* (2020). [DOI: 10.1027/1864-9335/a000430](https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-9335/a000430)

Provided by Bar-Ilan University

Citation: Being alone and socializing with others each contributes differently to personal growth (2020, November 19) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-11-socializing-contributes-differently-personal-growth.html>

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