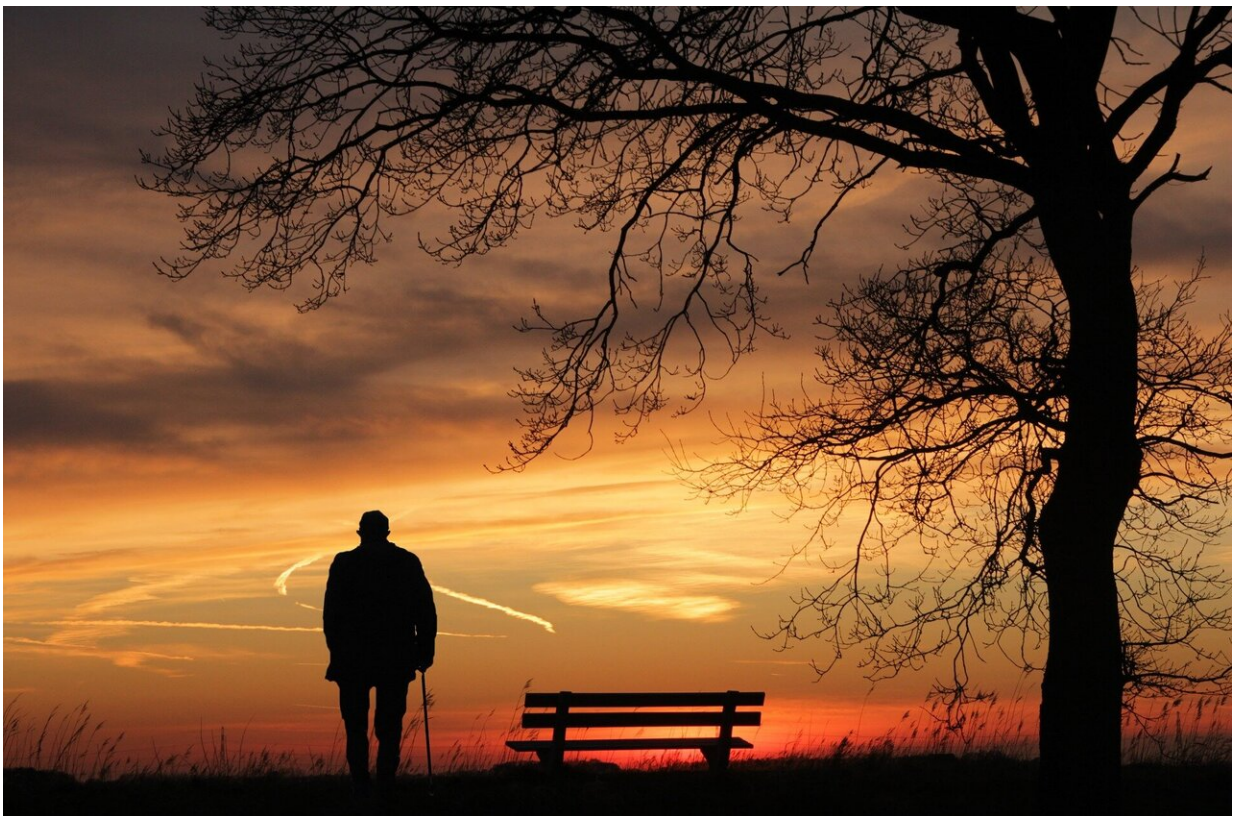


Choosing to be with others is more consequential to well-being than choosing to be alone

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Do we enjoy our time more when we are alone, or when we're in the company of others? A new study by researchers from Bar-Ilan

University in Israel has found that the element of choice in our daily social interactions plays a key role in our well-being.

Stable social relationships are conducive to well-being. But the effects of daily social interactions (or of [time](#) spent alone) on momentary feeling of happiness is not well understood. The current study, published in the *Journal of Happiness Studies*, suggests that our [sense](#) of choice of being with others (or of being alone) is a central factor which shapes our feelings in these contexts. Importantly, it was suggested that choice matters more 'with others' than alone, because experiences with others are more intense.

The research, led by Dr. Liad Uziel, of the Department of Psychology of Bar-Ilan University, with Dr. Tomer Schmidt-Barad, a postdoc in his lab now at the Peres Academic Center, consisted of two studies: an experiment that manipulated social context and choice status, and a ten-day experience-sampling study, which explored these variables in real-life settings.

The experience-sampling study involved 155 students. Each participant reported three times a day for ten consecutive days on episodic social experiences. Participants were asked in each "sample" to report on their social status (alone/with other people), whether they were in this situation by choice or not by choice, and their feelings (positive or negative emotion, satisfaction, sense of meaning, and sense of control). In total, more than 4,200 episodic reports were received. Of these, people were with others 60% of the time and alone 40% of the time. They were in these situations by their choice in 64% of the situations, and not by their choice in 36%. This indicates that the students spent about a third of their daytime in non-chosen social (or alone) situations.

Participants felt greater satisfaction (happiness) in the [company](#) of others than in being alone. However, there were great variations in the

experience of being with others. The greatest degree of happiness was felt when in the company of others by choice, but the lowest degree of happiness when in the company of others not by choice. Effects of being alone on [happiness](#) also varied by choice status, but to a lesser extent.

In a previous study Dr. Uziel found that social situations intensify emotions, while being alone was linked to calmer emotions and to a more relaxed overall experience. "The current research expands upon these conclusions by learning about people's experiences in real life, outside the lab, and by addressing the choice element as an important moderating factor," explains Dr. Uziel. "In both cases, social experiences are more intense, for better or worse."

Dr. Uziel says that choice, or even a subjective sense of choice, is a crucial factor in influencing the sense of well-being. People will feel better if they are alone by choice than if they are with others not by choice. Yet being in the company of others by [choice](#) contributes most to improving sense of well-being at any given moment.

More information: Liad Uziel et al, Choice Matters More with Others: Choosing to be with Other People is More Consequential to Well-Being than Choosing to be Alone, *Journal of Happiness Studies* (2022). [DOI: 10.1007/s10902-022-00506-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-022-00506-5)

Provided by Bar-Ilan University

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