

INTEGRATIVE LEADERSHIP INTERNATIONAL

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Lessons on the Path:

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“Loneliness & Aloneness”

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OBSERVATION:

This past week I experienced a deep sense of loneliness. It was the first time in a long time that I felt it to this depth and to this degree. Loneliness for me feels like a descent into the very pit of my stomach or a movement into a dark recess of my heart. As it moves, it leaves in its wake a sense of disconnection from your Ideal, yourself and others. And as I felt it, I wondered what could have provoked it?

Perhaps it was Lillas's absence away from our home where she attended a weeklong seminar in the mountains. Perhaps it was our young adult children passing through our home, physically present, but so occupied in their own lives and pursuits, they did not have time to share a meal or engage in meaningful discussion. I am not sure what triggered it? All I know is that it was present with me last week for the first time in a very long time.

In the past, when I felt the shadow of loneliness creep across my awareness, I would run from it, busy myself or seek others in a bid to avoid having to feel it. But since choosing to walk this path many years ago, early on we realized that avoidance does not work. Avoidance is a temporary solution that copes in the mechanistic moment, but does not satisfy or seek to uproot the cause. So this time, as I felt the spectre of loneliness appear in the very bowels of my being, I chose to fully re-experience it and allow it to emerge.

As it grew and blossomed in my belly, its solitary fragrance brought back bittersweet memories. In my recollections, I realized that for much of my life I had felt lonely. For me, loneliness is like a hunger that can't be satisfied or a thirst that can't be quenched. It is like a yearning that can only be satisfied in deep and meaningful relationship. It is a heartfelt desire to be totally with someone who could fully accept us, empathically listen to us, and truly look at us with eyes that are attuned to understanding, wisdom and compassion. And it seems that loneliness is the motivator that encourages us to search for the possibility of finding this magical and mysterious relationship in our life that will help make us whole and complete.

In my reflection, loneliness seemed independent of location or situation. I had experienced loneliness with others or when home alone; in nature or on the streets of a city; with friends and family or among virtual strangers. And as a result, early in my life, I had adopted a belief that loneliness was an inescapable part of the human condition and our constant companion on our life journey.

The feeling of loneliness is very different for me than the feeling of aloneness. When I am alone, I feel sufficient, satisfied, and self-contained. Like a woman friend of our family who remarked the other evening while we were having supper: "I am blessed, Rick. I like being alone." When I asked her why, she replied: "Because I consider myself to be my own best friend." How lovely...

Ramesh Belseker, reflecting on the cause of loneliness, suggested: 'Selfishness and self-centredness is the cause of all loneliness. Only an awakening to spiritual intelligence within can end it. And in that awakening, your *loneliness* will transform itself into aloneness. And in reflecting on your awakening and aloneness, your *aloneness* will in time and in turn transcend itself into a sense of *All Oneness*. And in that self-reflection and self-realization, one never needs to feel lonely or ever be alone again...'

In the distant past, I believed that loneliness would always be part of my human existence. But in my experience of this path, I sense today that that may not necessarily be true. How about you? Have you recently experienced loneliness? Are you content to remain within your aloneness? Or is there still something more that your heart of hearts continues to yearn for?

Loneliness and Aloneness...

*If in loneliness I lose my identity
being alone can help me regain it*

It is OK to be lonely

it is OK to be alone

--that is what I feel--

though in this I may not be alone.

Michael Hurley

APPLICATION: Reflect this week on when you felt lonely? What was that like for you? How did you feel? What did you think? What did that feeling of loneliness motivate you to do? How do you feel about being alone? Is there a sense of completeness or is there still something missing? In your coping strategy when confronted with these feelings of loneliness and aloneness, do you search outside of yourself for a solution in external relationships or do you search inside of yourself for a solution in pursuing a deeper more authentic inner relationship?

INSPIRATION: “The whole conviction of my life now rests upon the belief that loneliness, far from being a rare and curious phenomenon, peculiar to myself and to a few other solitary men, is the central and inevitable fact of human existence.” **Thomas Wolfe.** “We’re born alone, we live alone, we die alone. Only through our love and friendship can we create the illusion for the moment that we’re not alone.” **Orson Welles.** “When Christ said: “I was hungry and you fed me,” he didn't mean only the hunger for bread and for food; he also meant the hunger to be loved. Jesus himself experienced this loneliness. He came amongst his own and his own received him not, and it hurt him then and it has kept on hurting him. The same hunger, the same loneliness, the same having no one to be accepted by and to be loved and wanted by. Every human being in that case resembles Christ in his loneliness; and that is the hardest part, that's real hunger.” **Mother Theresa.** “Pray that your loneliness may spur you into finding something to live for, great enough to die for.” **Dag Hammarskjöld (1905-1961).** “To transform the emptiness of loneliness, to the fullness of aloneness. Ah, that is the secret of life.” **Sunita Khosla.**

INFORMATION: For the full Michael Hurley poem, see: www.conscoop.ottawa.on.ca/mensnet/MhurleyL.html

UPCOMING PUBLIC PROGRAMS:

April 14-16 2005: Integrative Leadership: Taking Leadership to the Next Level: Sponsor: Integrative Leadership International. **Location:** *Inn on Crowchild*, 5353 Crowchild Trail NW, Calgary, AB, Canada. **Tuition:** \$895.00 per person. **Topic:** Experiencing the path of integrative life and leadership. To download a brochure and registration form: **Click this link:** - http://www.integrativeleadership.ca/programs/calgary_april05.pdf. For more information, visit the I.L.I. website at www.integrativeleadership.ca.

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