The Expert Says-Winter 2013

There’s a difference between being lonely and being alone, says Atlanta-based Sarah Y. Vinson, MD, an adult, child and adolescent psychiatrist. Here, she talks about the different aspects of this complex mental health issue.

December 4, 2013 By Kate Ferguson

How can people recognize the difference between being alone and being lonely?
Generally, human beings are wired to seek some sort of connection with other people. Loneliness is feeling bad about the absence of that connection. But being alone doesn’t trigger the negative feelings that can arise from this lack of connection.

If you fear being alone, what are good ways to deal with this?
Figure out what your fear is based on. You may lack self-awareness and not know your value, so learn about yourself. And if you feel the need to have others around to feel safe, therapy can help you understand why and help change your thought patterns.

What are some easy ways for people to connect with others?
Pick up the phone and talk instead of texting. Socialize with friends. Just take that initial step.

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