

**You can be your Tool to Loneliness:
A Qualitative Study on Intrapersonal Solutions
for Loneliness among Young Adults**

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Table of content

Abstract	3
Introduction	4
Theoretical framework	7
Loneliness	7
Intrapersonal solutions for loneliness	8
Methods	11
Participants and design	11
Procedure	11
Positionality	12
Analysis	13
Results	14
Intrapersonal solutions for loneliness applied	14
<i>Solitary involvement</i>	14
<i>Reflection</i>	16
<i>Solitude</i>	17
<i>Distractions</i>	17
<i>Characterological changes</i>	18
<i>Acceptance</i>	18
<i>Religion and faith</i>	19
Causes of loneliness intrapersonal solutions are applied to	19
The utility of intrapersonal solutions for loneliness	20
Discussion	23
Summary	23
Strengths and limitations	24
Implications	25
References	27
Appendices	32
Appendix 1. Interdisciplinary statement	32
Appendix 2. Coding scheme	34

Abstract

Loneliness is related to both negative mental and physical health outcomes. This distress is especially prevalent among young adults due to the increasing feelings of loneliness they experience. Much research has examined social-orientated solutions for loneliness and various coping strategies for older adults to apply. However, we know little about intrapersonal solutions for young adults specifically. Therefore this study aims to identify intrapersonal solutions for loneliness and gain insight into how these solutions can contribute to coping with loneliness among young adults. I examine this with a qualitative research design by analyzing existing data from 17 in-depth interviews with participants from Austria, Bulgaria, Egypt, India, and Israel. Results indicate that young adults most frequently apply solitary involvement, reflection, solitude, distractions, and characterological changes as personal solutions to cope with their loneliness. Regarding the effectiveness of these intrapersonal solutions, results suggest that intrapersonal solutions mainly provide young adults valuable short-term support in dealing with loneliness as it distracts them from their feelings of loneliness, rather than tackling the core problem. A possible implication is to provide young adults with information on loneliness and possible intrapersonal solutions as mentioned in this study, for them to know how to cope with their loneliness in the short term.

Introduction

Loneliness is one of the most common distresses, that has become a widely recognized public health issue. There is a lot of empirical evidence that loneliness is related to both negative mental and physical health outcomes. This includes pathological conditions such as depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation (Cacioppo et al., 2015; Chang et al., 2019; Kılınç et al., 2020; Moeller & Seehuus, 2019), as well as diabetes (Hackett et al, 2020), obesity, cardiovascular disease and even early mortality (Cacioppo et al., 2015; Cohen et al, 2016).

Especially among young adults mental health problems and psychological distress are quite common due to the increasing feelings of loneliness (Musiat et al., 2018; Wright & Silard, 2022). In the Netherlands specifically, 27% of young adults aged 16-25, had strong feelings of loneliness in 2022 and even 63% had slight to strong feelings of loneliness (GGD GHOR Nederland, 2023).

Because of the serious comorbidity loneliness has and the fact that almost two-thirds of Dutch young adults experience feelings of loneliness, it is increasingly important to understand better how these feelings of loneliness can be coped with. Therefore, this study focuses on loneliness-specific remedies for young adults.

There already have been various attempts to treat loneliness or learn how to cope with it; by providing social support, increasing social interactions, and teaching social skills (Cacioppo et al, 2006; Masi et al., 2011). Noticeably, these interventions are focused on social interactions with other people. Weiss (1973) even wrote that the only remedy for loneliness as an absence of relational provision, is to find a source of emotional attachment. Establishing an individual's close relationships and rebuilding their social network is accepted to be one of the most effective ways of coping with loneliness (Rokach, 1990).

Yet, unlike most current studies, loneliness does not only result from shortcomings in

relationships with others. Also, loneliness can arise from life stressors, a poor relationship with oneself and a lack of purpose in life (Heu et al., 2020; Özdoğan, 2021; Kim et al., 2022). These intrapersonal causes for loneliness may require different remedies than interpersonal causes, namely intrapersonal solutions. Based on previous research, in this study the concept of intrapersonal solutions for loneliness is defined as acceptance, reflection, solitude and solitary involvement (Perlman & Peplau, 1981; Rokach, 1990; Heu et al., 2020).

There already is some research that addresses some more intrapersonal coping strategies. Deckx et al. (2018) show that there are problem-focused coping strategies and emotion-focused strategies for loneliness for adults, such as talking with someone about their feelings (problem-focused) and taking time to figure out their feelings (emotion-focused). Other studies also described coping strategies for older adults, such as lowering expectations of social relationships (Schoenmakers et al., 2012; Kharicha et al., 2018; Heylen, 2010). Yet all these studies focus on older people. As Heu et al. (2020) stated, there is little research about loneliness-specific solutions that individuals apply themselves among young adults.

It is important to study how intrapersonal solutions for loneliness can be applied by young adults due to the high prevalence of loneliness among this group. Additionally, during this phase in life, there are numerous life changes, such as forming an independent sense of identity, leaving the parental home, entering the labor market, and becoming economically independent. These changes also influence the quantity and quality of personal interactions, making it even harder to deal with loneliness through an already changing social network (Matthews et al., 2019; Osborn, Weatherburn & French, 2021).

So, it is especially important to provide this population with the right knowledge and tools to cope with their present feelings of loneliness through intrapersonal solutions, to resolve the negative consequences of loneliness.

Therefore this study aims to identify intrapersonal solutions for loneliness and gain

insight into how these solutions can contribute in coping with loneliness among young adults.

This study will thus address how intrapersonal solutions for loneliness can support young adults in coping with feelings of loneliness.

The following sub-questions will aid in answering the main research question:

1. Which intrapersonal solutions for loneliness do young adults apply?
2. For what kind of causes of loneliness do young adults apply intrapersonal solutions?
3. Do young adults perceive these intrapersonal solutions as effective or maladaptive?

Theoretical framework

In this section, I discuss the key concepts of this study. These concepts are loneliness and intrapersonal coping strategies for loneliness, which are taken from literature. In addition, some theories are presented that are relevant to my research question. These key concepts and theories form a theoretical framework from which I will start my qualitative study.

Loneliness

Perlman & Peplau (1981) described loneliness as an unpleasant experience that occurs when an individual's social network is quantitatively or qualitatively deficient; Cacioppo & Patrick (2008) defined loneliness as the subjective experience of the discrepancy between the social connection one wants and the social connection one has; VanderWeele et al. (2012) described the same as perceived social isolation; meaning there is a perceived discrepancy between the desired and actual relationship. The shared component of these different definitions and how loneliness will be presented in this study is when one's desires and the reality of one's social network do not match, which evokes unpleasant feelings.

In addition, in literature two types of loneliness are described (De Jong Gierveld et al., 2006; Cakar, 2020). First, there is emotional loneliness which results from the lack of close attachments to others such as a best friend or partner, and has been suggested to cause feelings of anxiety and emptiness. Second, there is social loneliness which results from the lack of a social network such as friends or colleagues, and has been suggested to cause feelings of depression and distress.

Yet these types of loneliness are again more focused on social networks, while there are also more intrapersonal causes for loneliness, such as certain personal characteristics, a poor relationship with oneself and a lack of purpose in life (Heu et al., 2020; Özdoğan, 2021;

Kim et al., 2022). It is important to acknowledge these causes since these intrapersonal causes may require more intrapersonal solutions.

Intrapersonal solutions for loneliness

Based on the literature (Perlman & Peplau, 1981; Rokach, 1990; Folkman, 2020; Heu et al., 2020), this study categorizes the concept of ‘intrapersonal solutions for loneliness’ into acceptance, reflection, solitude, and solitary involvement. These four aspects focus on coping strategies that are not related to one’s social environment but relate to the individual and are coping strategies an individual can apply themselves. See Table 1 for a complete overview.

Table 1

Types of intrapersonal solutions for loneliness per study

My study	Rokach^a	Perlman & Peplau^b	Heu et al^c
Solitary involvement	Solitary involvement - Daily responsibilities - Personal development - Leisure and extracurricular activities	Selecting tasks one enjoys alone	Activity Self-development
Reflection	Reflective solitude - Cognitive changes in perception of the situation - Reassurance and positive outlook - Self-intimacy and inner search	X	Reflection
Acceptance	Facing and accepting loneliness	X	Acceptance

^a Rokach (1990)

^b Perlman & Peplau (1981)

^c Heu et al. (2020)

Folkman (2020) distinguished two types of coping, problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping targets the cause of stress and includes strategies such as information and advice seeking. In contrast, emotion-focused coping focuses on the thoughts and actions as a response to the cause of stress and includes strategies such as distancing and seeking social support.

Findings from a systematic review of these two types of coping state that problem-

focused coping is associated with lower levels of loneliness, while emotion-focused coping is associated with higher levels of loneliness. Therefore problem-focused coping would be a more effective strategy than emotion-focused coping (Deckx et al, 2018). Integrating this knowledge into my study, it will be relevant to examine if participants also experience emotion-focused coping to be not that useful and if so, identify which types of intrapersonal solutions for loneliness are more focused on the causes of stress instead of the thoughts and actions that follow this cause.

Rokach (1990) developed a comprehensive theoretical model of three phases that encompass a variety of individual coping approaches and strategies for loneliness. These phases are acceptance, transition and reaching out. The acceptance phase is a time of self-healing where solitary involvement and reflective solitude are central. The second phase, transition, is about personal readjustment and searching for inner recourses. Lastly, the phase of reaching out describes achieving social reintegration and gaining a feeling of belonging.

Where this last phase is focused on building social bridges that replace the feelings of loneliness with new feelings of belonging, with this model, Rokach argues that the first two phases (acceptance and transition) are more intrapersonal focused and need to take place beforehand. This shows the importance of the intrapersonal aspect in the coping process. The results of the content analysis of Rokach (1990) in which 526 respondents took place also confirm this. The coping strategies respondents addressed as the most popular and far more used than others were 'reflective solitude' and 'solitary involvement', both part of the first acceptance and self-healing phase. In contrast, 'indirect social contact' which is part of the third phase of building social bridges, respondents appointed this one to be the least often employed strategy.

Perlman and Peplau (1981) specified three ways of coping with loneliness through the cognitive theoretical approach for loneliness. The first way of coping with loneliness is to reduce the desired level of social contact. This can be accomplished by converging the desired to the achieved level, selecting tasks one enjoys alone and changing standards for who one accepts as a friend. The second way of coping focuses on establishing and improving social relationships to get to a higher level of social contact. The third and last way to cope with loneliness is to alter the perceived importance of the discrepancy of one's desired and the reality of one's social network. This can be done by ignoring the problem or by seeking distraction in other activities or tasks.

Here as well there are solutions for loneliness that come from a more intrapersonal point of view, in which there is also a focus on actions one can apply themselves such as undertaking tasks and activities that are enjoyable to take part in alone.

Heu et al (2020) addressed four themes within intrapersonal solutions for loneliness. These themes are; acceptance, reflection, self-development and activity, and are in line with previous studies. Additionally, this research states that solitude and solitary activity are relevant coping strategies for loneliness.

Yet where this study focuses for a small proportion on remedies for loneliness, discussing intrapersonal, relational and other solutions, the main focus is on whether or not the definition of loneliness differs across cultures. In my study the intrapersonal solutions for loneliness will be the main point of focus and therefore contribute to knowing how to specifically cope with the feelings of loneliness.

Methods

Participants and design

My study was conducted through a qualitative research design using existing data (Heu et al, 2021). The aim of this research was to study whether the meaning of the term loneliness and the experiences it describes differ across countries with different levels of social embeddedness. The method for this data collection were semi-structured in-depth interviews. This design and method fit my research question which is about the perception of young adults of how intrapersonal solutions for loneliness can help them in coping with these feelings of loneliness. A method like an in-depth interview is therefore most suitable because it enables gaining insight in one's thoughts and feelings about applying intrapersonal solutions for loneliness.

Participants came from countries and cultures that contain different levels of social embeddedness. These countries were Austria, Bulgaria, Egypt, India and Israel. The existing data consisted of 42 participants, of which 17 were included in my study based on participant characteristics. This characteristic was that participants were within the age range of 24-36 years old. Ultimately this resulted in 17 semi-structured in-depth interviews with in total two Austrian, three Bulgarian, five Egyptian, five Indian, and two Israeli participants.

Procedure

To sample these participants, a mix of purposive and convenience with snowballing sampling was used. Participants were recruited through the interviewer and collaborators' social networks. Because of the sensitivity of a topic like loneliness, this approach through personal contact allowed access to participants who tended to be less reluctant to talk about loneliness.

Participants were invited to be interviewed, filmed for a project about loneliness and fully informed about the aim of the interviews and their rights. Informed consent was given before the start of the interview. Participation was voluntary. Because of the film project it

was not completely anonymous, yet everything was pseudonymized and all identifying information was deleted. Participants could withdraw at any time and also withdraw their data at any time, yet no participant did so. In addition, participants did not need debriefing since there was no form of deception.

The semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in the participants' home country. They could choose the location for the interview themselves, provided that recordings were possible. All interviews, except for the interviews with Austrian participants, were co-conducted by the interviewer and a collaborator from the respective country. The interviews were conducted in the respective local language, paraphrased during the interview and later translated into English by the collaborators. The duration of the interviews varied between 10 and 60 minutes.

The main topics talked about in the semi-structured in-depth interviews were definitions of loneliness and perceived causes and remedies for loneliness. The interviews started with some small talk, an introduction, two superficial questions about the participants' family status, followed by the core themes that focused on the participants' experiences and perceptions of loneliness, causes, coping strategies and remedies. Probes were being used to get more in-depth details about one's experiences. In addition, participants shared some information about their demographics, relationships and cultural characteristics in a short, written questionnaire.

Positionality

For the positionality of the interviewer, it was important to note that she was a 27-year-old female doctoral student during the time of interviewing, originally from Austria, a less socially embedded cultural context. Regarding my positionality, I am also from a less socially embedded cultural context. Therefore a possible 'blind spot' for me is finding individuality normal within social relationships and maybe not so quickly acknowledging it as 'loneliness'.

I acknowledged that this could color my perception and therefore was important to take into account when analyzing the data.

Analysis

The analytical method used for analyzing the existing data was an inductive analysis. The interviews were translated from the respective language into English and/or transcribed by the interviewer, translators, or international students. These translations were also double-checked by the collaborators.

These transcripts and also the theoretical framework formed the starting point for the inductive and deductive analysis. For the deductive analysis, already existing codes about coping strategies are used. These were then complemented with inductive codes when necessary. Important characteristics I took into notion were sex and age to state whether certain intrapersonal solutions differ for people of different sexes and ages. I used Microsoft Word in OneDrive as the software for my coding process. First I selected the pieces of the transcripts that were relevant for my study by color-coding different answers to my three sub-questions. Every color-coded text fragment was then provided by a code related to existing literature (deductive coding) or an open code (inductive coding). Subsequently, I structured these open codes and searched for overarching themes that became the axial codes. At last, with selective coding, I structured the main themes of the axial codes complemented by the deductive codes to create a structured overview. This visual was used to answer my sub-questions and ultimately my main research question.

Results

In this section, I discuss the results of my study. These results are based on 15 interviews, out of 17 since 2 participants did not indicate applying intrapersonal solutions for their feelings of loneliness.

Intrapersonal solutions for loneliness applied

Based on the deductive and inductive analysis some themes of intrapersonal solutions for loneliness could be distinguished. The five main types of intrapersonal solutions participants most frequently employed to cope with their loneliness are solitary involvement, reflection, solitude, distractions, and characterological changes. In addition, some participants mentioned acceptance, and religion and faith as an intrapersonal solution, yet at a lesser frequency. Each of these intrapersonal solutions will be addressed in more detail below.

Solitary involvement

The intrapersonal solution for loneliness most frequently employed by participants is solitary involvement. The kind of activities in which participants were solitary involved in, differ from daily -, leisure - to self-development activities. This aligns with how Rokach (1990) defined solitary involvement, who wrote that this element exists of daily responsibilities, personal development, and leisure and extracurricular activities. Heu et al. (2020) also wrote about self-development and daily responsibilities. Solitary involvement also corresponds with ‘selecting tasks one enjoys alone’ (Perlman & Peplau, 1981). See Table 1 for an overview of ‘solitary involvement’ definitions in the literature.

“I used to sit and think about it a lot - and then, later, I felt that I should not think about it. So, I went to work. [...] I would wash clothes, vessels... like that, do household chores” (IN4). With this statement, she talked about engaging in daily responsibilities such as

work to cope with feelings of loneliness. Other comparable daily activities participants mentioned are school and going to the store.

In addition to these responsible duties, many participants also spoke about leisure activities as intrapersonal solutions. To cope with loneliness I4 said she *“began to run, because [she] had a lot of anger with regard to the breakup, as well as other feelings. And [she] felt that it freed [her] and helped [her] let go...”* Participants mentioned a lot of different leisure activities like running, walking, being in nature, watching TV, and reading. The most important thing all these activities have in common is that it is an activity one enjoys to undertake (alone).

“[P]hotography definitely helped me through” said IN10, an example of how self-development helped in coping with loneliness. Other examples of activities participants mentioned are following a course, meditation, writing and reading. Regarding that last one, the following quote is a good example of pursuing an interest avoided for years:

“I started reading again. And I spent close to 3,5 hours reading and I hadn't thought about being lonely or anything during that time. And it felt great, because I was jumping into a hobby that I've always been doing and I'd given up for a while” (IN2).

The difference between leisure and self-development activities is that the latter is more focused on growth and a creative aspect, whereas leisure activities can be all kinds of activities that aid in self-healing. Out of the three components of solitary involvement; daily responsibilities, leisure activities, and self-development, leisure activities were mentioned the most frequently as intrapersonal solutions to employ by participants.

Reflection

Aside from solitary involvement, half of all participants also spoke about applying reflection as an intrapersonal solution for their feelings of loneliness. These participants mentioned different activities in which reflection is the core element, as a solution for their loneliness. These different activities fit the description of the items of Rokach's (1990) reflective solitude: cognitive changes in perception of the situation, reassurance and positive outlook, and self-intimacy and inner search. This also aligns with 'reflection' in Heu et al.'s study (2020). See Table 1 for a complete overview of these definitions. More detailed information on these items can be found in the respective papers.

“[A] person sometimes needs to reserve themselves, to be alone with themselves, to deal with these things, to talk to themselves alone” said B6. Reflection especially allowed participants to have a moment to deal with their emotions and change their point of view, which contributed to coping with loneliness. A9 explained the latter of these: *“what really helps me a lot is [halt] to meditate. I meditate [halt] every day and there - through that, one just gets a somewhat different perspective.”* Other activities that helped to deal with emotions through self-reflection were talking to oneself and writing. *“I used to write when I felt depressed. Kind of diaries uh... that was one other thing that helped me. Instead of trapping these feelings inside, I wrote them down on paper”* said E4.

In addition, out of the different components of reflection, participants most frequently mentioned having a positive mindset as an intrapersonal solution. Happy thoughts offered reassurance and therefore contributed to coping with loneliness.

“Just feel positive about - try to look at the good side of things, out of whatever you've got. Look at the brighter side, and then uh try to work towards, improve on those um,

brighter aspects. Go for positive reinforcement rather than uh negative reinforcement” (IN10).

Solitude

Another intrapersonal solution a lot of participants mentioned was solitude. The first phase of Rokach’s (1990) model of coping is ‘acceptance’, which involves ‘solitary’ aspects. However, these aspects do not include solitude as simply being alone with oneself without engaging in any activity. Yet quite some participants seemed to talk about this kind of strategy to deal with loneliness as they addressed being alone without mentioning participating in other activities. A9 spoke of this by saying that she “*consciously took the time to be alone and... yeah, [she] tried to kind of consciously experience that. This - this loneliness, this being alone.*” Therefore this intrapersonal solution is an important contribution to the other types of intrapersonal solutions already discussed.

Distractions

In addition to the intrapersonal solutions ‘solitary involvement’ and ‘reflection’, another related theme surfaced, that is not commonly found in literature. This new intrapersonal solution is called ‘distractions.’ Almost half of all participants mentioned certain activities that act as a distraction for their feelings of loneliness to not feel it. I3 explained this by saying that he “*will be busy busy busy. And [he] will just throw the sense of loneliness to the side. [...]* [He] won’t deal with it. The best thing is to escape from it.”

Participants mentioned activities to distract oneself like watching tv, reading and writing. The difference with such activities being leisure - or self-development activities is that in these cases, participants used it to not deal with their feelings, instead of facing them. Later on I will explain the utility of this intrapersonal solution with my third sub-question.

Characterological changes

“It was me. [...] I started to say to myself: of course, I will not continue my life in this miserable way,” answered E8 to the question of what helped alleviating her feelings of loneliness. This statement explains the determination of change one can feel to cope with loneliness. Almost half of all participants mentioned changes in their characteristics as an intrapersonal solution to cope with their loneliness. This is in line with Rokach’s (1990) characterological changes item, which is part of the State and Trait modification factor of transition. More detailed information can be found in the respective paper.

Another example was given by E4, who experienced a positive change in character which helped with her feelings of loneliness: *“The positive side is that I learned to be self-dependent, or that I should help myself out of that feeling of loneliness.”*

Acceptance

In addition to the five main types of intrapersonal solutions for loneliness described above, participants also mentioned acceptance, and religion and faith as intrapersonal solutions, yet at a lesser frequency. Nevertheless, participants applied them and could be of support in coping with loneliness.

“[T]o really try to feel and to accept it. [...] Because I've [halt] made the experience myself that the more one accepts this, the more one says "yes", the less bad it will [halt] be” A9 said about truly feeling and accepting the loneliness one experiences. Acceptance was one of the intrapersonal solutions some participants mentioned to be of good use in dealing with loneliness, as it decreased the feelings of loneliness. This is in line with research of Heu et al. (2020) and Rokach (1990), the latter stating it as ‘facing and accepting loneliness.’ Also, see Table 1 for an overview of these definitions.

Religion and faith

Two participants also talked about God as an important factor in the process of coping with their feelings of loneliness. This type of intrapersonal solution corresponds to the ‘religion and faith’ cluster of the transition phase (Rokach, 1990). I3 explained that in the case of loneliness, *“God was kind of a solace. As a dad, friend, that is always there. I was talking with him a lot. [...] God is without a doubt an address that I get help from in this case.”*

To conclude, young adults applied various intrapersonal solutions to cope with their feelings of loneliness. The strategies they most frequently employed were solitary involvement, reflection, solitude, distractions, and characterological changes. In addition, sometimes they also employed acceptance, and religion and faith to cope with loneliness.

Causes of loneliness intrapersonal solutions are applied to

The second sub-question focused on the causes of loneliness to which participants applied intrapersonal solutions. Almost half of the time, participants spoke about loneliness and solutions they applied without explicitly stating the specific cause of that loneliness.

Unfortunately, this resulted in limited evidence to find any clear patterns to define whether one type of intrapersonal solution for loneliness was applied to a certain cause of loneliness. For example, when feeling lonely because of the passing of a family member, one participant took part in daily responsibilities (solitary involvement), while another participant committed to an inner search (reflection).

Participants mentioned several causes for their loneliness. A random sample of these causes includes the death of a family member, the break up with a fiancé or partner, feeling unseen by friends, being alone on a holiday, and feeling like they did not belong. See Heu et al. (2020) for a more detailed visual of all the different causes of loneliness.

It seemed like participants more frequently used intrapersonal solutions to cope with their feelings originating from loneliness (emotion-focused coping), rather than dealing with the cause of their loneliness (problem-focused coping) (Folkman, 2020). B6 gave an example of this: *“I try to get myself pumped to do some kind of sport, that's important to me. [...] It's not that it helps me deal with the problem but it rather calms me down somehow.”*

In addition, it is important to mention that no specific type of intrapersonal solution could be linked to only being a problem- or emotion-focused coping strategy. For example, one participant applied personal development as an intrapersonal solution to express her feelings (emotion-focused coping), while another participant applied the same intrapersonal solution to engage in a hobby through which she did not feel lonely anymore (problem-focused coping).

To conclude, participants applied all different kinds of intrapersonal solutions for all different kinds of loneliness causes. No clear pattern could be found between those two. Yet, emotion-focused coping was more frequently employed than problem-focused coping.

The utility of intrapersonal solutions for loneliness

My third sub-question focused on the utility of the intrapersonal solutions that young adults apply. This is an important factor in understanding whether intrapersonal solutions are effective or maladaptive and how these solutions can be of support in coping with loneliness.

Of all times participants mentioned whether their intrapersonal solution for coping with loneliness was of any effectivity, almost all participants labeled them as effective strategies. E10 explained this best, mentioning multiple types of intrapersonal solutions, all contributing to the elimination of loneliness:

“Maybe getting closer to God - that is the most important thing uh... I started to engage in voluntary work – like, helping people, [...] I started to think positively. I started to set goals and try to achieve them. Uh... All of this made it possible for me to get out of the problem. Uh... I always try to think that this feeling of loneliness is just a feeling and that it is not the reality that I have to live in. That's why the situation changed. And getting closer to God had the biggest influence on eliminating these feelings of loneliness.”

While the complete disappearance of feelings of loneliness may be most desirable, intrapersonal solutions were also effective in decreasing these feelings or raising more happy feelings in contrast. For example, by letting go of negative feelings, being able to channel feelings, or doing something one enjoys. *“Tiny things like that that simply make me feel good,”* B6 said after talking about intrapersonal solutions like watching movies and going to Zumba.

Yet since some of these ‘effective strategies’ for loneliness were also mentioned as distractions for feeling lonely or were more emotion-focused rather than problem-focused, it is questionable whether or not these intrapersonal solutions are truly effective in the elimination of loneliness.

In addition, there were also a few times in which participants labeled different kinds of intrapersonal solutions as maladaptive. Out of these times, it stood out that the intrapersonal solution most frequently applied was ‘solitude.’ A7 explained this by saying that when one feels lonely, *“[t]o lock oneself up and to hide will - will certainly never be the solution.”* Other participants also spoke about trying hard to be not alone, as they considered this destructive and an amplifier of the feelings of loneliness. It is important to mention this since solitude is one of the intrapersonal solutions participants most frequently employed to cope

with their loneliness.

To conclude, participants experienced almost all intrapersonal solutions as effective strategies to cope with their feelings of loneliness and were therefore of good support. Yet, often these 'solutions' were seen as distractions or were more emotion-focused instead of problem-focused. The intrapersonal solution participants also found to be sometimes maladaptive was being in solitude.

Discussion

Summary

This study aimed to identify intrapersonal solutions for loneliness and gain insight into how these solutions can contribute to coping with loneliness among young adults. This was examined by analyzing existing data from 17 in-depth interviews with participants from Austria, Bulgaria, Egypt, India, and Israel.

The intrapersonal solutions young adults most frequently apply for their loneliness are solitary involvement, reflection, solitude, activities that distract, and changes in character. In addition, sometimes they employ acceptance, and religion and faith to cope with loneliness. This is in line with research from Rokach (1990), in which respondents addressed 'reflective solitude' and 'solitary involvement' as the most popular and frequently used coping strategies. Especially solitary involvement, reflection, and acceptance also align with the statement of Moustakas (1961) who suggests that "there is no solution to loneliness but to accept it, live with it, and let it be."

No clear pattern is found between certain types of intrapersonal solutions being used more frequently to deal with certain types of causes of loneliness. This may have resulted from a lack of sufficient data or simply because there is no link to be found between certain intrapersonal solutions and certain loneliness causes. Literature shows no studies on these specific patterns yet.

Emotion-focused coping seemed to be more frequently employed than problem-focused coping, meaning young adults used intrapersonal solutions more often to deal with their feelings, rather than the core problem that caused their loneliness. Additionally, almost all times participants employed intrapersonal solutions they labeled them as effective in coping with their loneliness. For example, intrapersonal solutions helped decrease negative feelings and raise more positive, happy thoughts and feelings. This finding is not in line with

research from Deckx et al. (2018), who stated that emotion-focused coping is associated with higher levels of loneliness.

Considering that ‘distractions’ were frequently used as an intrapersonal solution, and various intrapersonal solutions seemed to be more often used as emotion-coping strategies, it is questionable whether these intrapersonal solutions truly eliminate loneliness, even though participants labeled them as ‘effective’ in doing so. Then, it seems intrapersonal solutions are likely effective, not specifically in tackling the core problem of loneliness, but rather in dealing with the negative emotions of loneliness for a small amount of time. This suggests that intrapersonal solutions are mainly effective as distractions for feelings of loneliness and can support young adults in managing emotions stemming from loneliness in the short term. This is in line with previous research in which the findings also state that distractions served as a short-term coping strategy for loneliness, rather than alleviating loneliness (Kharicha, 2020; Vasileiou, 2019; Verity, 2022)

Strengths and limitations

A strength of my research is the advancement of scientific knowledge on intrapersonal solutions specifically for young adults. Where existing literature mainly focuses on loneliness among older adults and social-oriented solutions, my research provides new insights into how the mechanism of intrapersonal solutions for loneliness work, and how they can support young adults specifically in coping with loneliness. This is a valuable addition to both science and society.

Another strength of my study is that it includes participants from countries with different levels of social embeddedness. This allows my findings to be generalizable to a broader population, encompassing both individualistic and collectivistic countries.

One limitation of my study is that there was limited evidence to find clear patterns

between certain causes of loneliness and certain intrapersonal solutions for loneliness, and patterns between types of intrapersonal solutions being only a problem- or only an emotion-focused strategy. This may have resulted from only using existing data that was not specifically focused on my research question. Additionally, I chose not to complement this with new data collection because of time management. Yet, since there also appears to be no further research conducted on these specific patterns, this is an interesting opportunity for future research. A quantitative study could explore the correlations between loneliness causes and intrapersonal solutions for loneliness.

Another limitation is the age range of my population, which starts at 24 years old. My study focuses on young adults. However, according to Arnett (2007), individuals experience 'emerging adulthood' when they are between the ages of 18 and 25. This means that the typical period of being a young adult begins earlier than the age range applied in my study. Therefore, a recommendation for future research would be to conduct more data on this subject using a larger sample that includes a younger population, starting from the age of 18.

Implications

Intrapersonal solutions can provide young adults with effective short-term support to deal with feelings of loneliness. A practical implication for young adults would be to provide them with information on the different intrapersonal solutions for loneliness as mentioned in the results of this study, and how these activities can help them deal with loneliness for a small amount of time. A few examples of activities one can think of are working, going to school, partaking in a hobby, reading, writing, meditation, and sports. A way through which young adults could be provided with such information is through the student guidance and development department at school and the human resources department at work.

Additionally, it is important to note that people may cope differently with the same

cause of loneliness due to differences in resources, motivation, experiences, preferences, and skills. Because of these internal and external factors, one type of intrapersonal solution for loneliness would be a better fit for an individual than another type of intrapersonal solution (e.g. writing instead of following a course because of financial resources) (Folkman, 2020). Therefore, young adults are encouraged to try various intrapersonal solutions in different situations to see what works best for them.

Conclusion

To conclude, even though intrapersonal solutions might not eliminate loneliness among young adults, they seem to provide short-term support in dealing with their emotions stemming from loneliness. This means young adults have a valuable tool they can deploy against their loneliness.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interdisciplinary statement

Loneliness is a very complex concept consisting of emotional and social loneliness, resulting from both interpersonal and intrapersonal causes (Cakar, 2020; De Jong Gierveld et al., 2006; Heu et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2022), provoking serious mental and physical complaints (Cacioppo et al., 2015; Chang et al., 2019; Cohen et al., 2016; Hackett et al., 2020; Kılınç et al., 2020; Moeller & Seehuus, 2019). This requires a multi-perspective look into how the problem manifests and how it can be resolved or coped with which all contribute to helping understand the mechanism of loneliness. In my study, I most frequently employed the disciplines of psychology and social psychology because of both the internal processes part of loneliness and the relation to the social environment. The discipline of psychology offers a broad perspective on how loneliness affects people, what can motivate them to apply certain types of intrapersonal solutions for their loneliness, and consequently how this affects their emotions.

In my study, I especially addressed the personal system and the microsystem, regarding the Bronfenbrenner model (Cala & Soriano, 2014). Within the personal system, there is an individual with an identity and psycho-social factors of influence. These are especially relevant concerning intrapersonal solutions for loneliness since they are coping strategies individuals can apply themselves. Yet because loneliness is also a concept related to social connections, the microsystem in which an individual is influenced by socialization agents, also plays a big role.

As discussed in my strengths, limitations, and recommendations, my qualitative research design offered detailed insight into how young adults experienced intrapersonal solutions to be of support in coping with their loneliness. Yet, the recommendation for a

quantitative study on the correlations between loneliness causes and intrapersonal solutions for loneliness has also been made. This research method would be a meaningful contribution to helping understand the problem, as it provides more insight into finding the best fit of a certain type of intrapersonal solution to a certain type of loneliness cause.

To cross boundaries between science and practice concerning intrapersonal solutions for loneliness among young adults, the most important stakeholders are the young adults themselves, schools, and workplaces. The guidance and development department of colleges and universities, and the human resources department of workplaces can provide their young adults with information on loneliness and coping strategies. Additionally, young adults are responsible for trying out different intrapersonal solutions to see what works best for them to cope effectively with their loneliness.

Appendix 2. Coding scheme

Participants transcript	Sub question 1	Sub question 2	Sub question 3
Text fragment	Which intrapersonal solutions for loneliness do young adults apply?	For what kind of causes of loneliness do young adults apply intrapersonal solutions?	Do young adults perceive these intrapersonal solutions as effective or maladaptive?
Yes, I did - well, I have - have, relatively fast - well, or in principle I am a type who does not have a problem to also talk about these kinds of things, ja? So, I am relatively open and um - I have also talked - I mean, maybe not always with absolute strangers, but mostly in the family, where there was already some experience in that direction and [eben] also with my sister, for example, who has also experienced that herself. And - and - it was indeed good to talk with people, ja? So, like that, one could also overcome this more easily - more easily or at least deal with it more easily. Talk with people who have made similar experiences. Well, so, yeah, social contact is certainly - certainly helpful with any illness or any problem. To lock oneself up and to hide will - will certainly never be the solution - or very rarely, I think.	Open code: Lock oneself and hide Deductive code: X Axial code: Solitude	Loneliness	Maladaptive Because "will certainly never be the solution."
I'd say, but also not that bad because you know where it comes from after all, ja? So, you can evaluate it correctly - you can also simply leave or - phhh - just decide accordingly: maybe I feel like - just feel like making a night of it after all. So, like that, yeah. So that is not a - not a dramatic story because one also usually - well, in that concrete case, I know in advance what I get myself into and, accordingly, I also have the leisure [Muße] to do that to myself and then maybe also feel lonely for a short time and to then either just say: okay, thank you, it has been enough for today or - or I just find a compromise after all and say: okay, I listen to that now and - and kind of act along and can also lower the level a little to not get bored out or - or adjust to that a little after all [ja?].	Open code: Evaluate/make a decision Deductive code: Cognitive changes in perceptions of a situation Axial code: Reflection	Feeling like you don't belong	X

<p>I actually indeed consciously took the time to be alone and... yeah, I tried to kind of consciously experience that. This - this loneliness, this being alone. Okay, what do I do with myself or not? Or what - how-how do I organize my day now? What do I undertake - without people? And I have actually consciously set that - that I - this [eben] also - this uh - that I work on that topic a little, too. [laughs] So, this conscious perception and to - uh to- actually to - what is it called? To ff - uh - bring to mind that uh it will not be forever. That I am not - that I am actually not really alone - right now, I am alone or I feel lonely, but I still have all my friends when I'm at home, or my family, and there, I can always turn to them and ... yeah, I will manage these one, two, three, four weeks [laughs]. So yeah, simply the conscious dealing with it. I figured that out for myself. Yeah ...</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>So, I wanted that - I wanted to be alone.</p>	<p>Open code: Consciously being alone and dealing with it Deductive code: X Axial code: Solitude</p>	<p>Wanting to be alone</p>	<p>X</p>
<p>yeah, that is very difficult, this readjustment. But I believe that this is really just a matter of habituation, kind of ... Because one is not used to being alone - then it is just the more difficult to, and the faster one feels lo- lonely then, I believe. Yeah... [...] Such a - well, like with depression [halt], that is just also - that just drags you down. And then one is - one also actually wants to be alone more but because one wants to be alone more, one maybe also, well, feels more lonely or - one feels, yeah ... and then it is such an amplifying effect, it has additionally [laughs] ... yeah.</p>	<p>Open code: Habituation Deductive code: X Axial code: Solitude</p>	<p>Readjustments in relationships</p>	<p>Maladaptive Because: "and then it is such an amplifying effect"</p>
<p>Yes, either... [laughs] Well, either I didn't do anything... Uh, I was kind of in... yeah, or... I tried to schedule something with friends, to go out. Simply to talk to someone, to meet for a coffee, just something - fill time. Or do sports. Or doing this course or that course. So, fill, fill the time. Yes, absolutely.</p>	<p>Open code: Fill time Deductive code: Leisure and extracurricular activities Axial code: Solitary involvement</p>	<p>Loneliness</p>	<p>Effective Because answer to 'So, did you do anything against the loneliness?'</p>
<p>Yes, I believe - yes... erm... [long silence] So, time, definitely. And uh... meditation. And then also opening up for new things. So, also, kind of getting back onto one's feet and just -</p>	<p>Open code: Fill time with - meditation - do sports - follow a course</p>	<p>Loneliness</p>	<p>Effective Because answer to 'Or what could resolve</p>

<p>yeah, opening up and also others, well, again... yeah, being active again. Or - how should I put this? [clears her throat] So, what really helped me - that was to bridge time, but also of course a - uh - a new relationship</p>	<p>- opening up to new things Deductive code: Personal development Axial code: Reflection</p>		<p>that then, the loneliness? Is there anything?’</p>
<p>That's simply these thoughts - these convictions that one has - um, they can simply absolutely drag - uh - what's that called? [considerations in German] Drag one down, exactly. Just absolutely drag one down. But if one is somehow so open and one also kind of doesn't doubt oneself and one somehow has enough s- self-confidence or something like that - or self-confidence self- self-esteem, let's say, then it is an entirely different feeling, too. Then the loneliness is also much more - [halt] also gone, I believe.</p>	<p>Open code: Self-esteem Deductive code: Characterological changes Axial code: Characterological changes</p>	<p>Thoughts / convictions in groups</p>	<p>Effective Because: “Then the loneliness is also much more - [halt] also gone.”</p>
<p>but it is now no hindrance for me to um - or I - well, the - the feeling of loneliness isn't added anymore. Because I accept it. Because I think: yeah, everyone is different. Everyone has their - their convictions, everyone has their hobbies, everyone has their thoughts and - whatever, ways of living and there one can - and then, you can't do anything. Either you accept the other or the group and go - uh go with it and - or not.</p>	<p>Open code: Acceptance Deductive code: Acceptance Axial code: Acceptance</p>	<p>Thoughts / convictions in groups</p>	<p>Effective Because “the feeling of loneliness isn't added anymore.”</p>
<p>And, but I - really – uh - what really helps me a lot is [halt] to meditate. I meditate [halt] every day and there - through that, one just gets a somewhat different perspective and yeah - yeah, well much - much - much has improved.</p>	<p>Open code: Meditate Deductive code: Personal Development Axial code: Solitary involvement</p>	<p>Thoughts / convictions in groups</p>	<p>Effective Because “much has improved.”</p>
<p>But I believe that the perspective uhhh is very important. So, the perspective is - that is, simply the point of view, yeah. I still have the same friends as before and I have some new - also newer friends now. But I also have my old friends and there, nothing has changed, it has rather only for me - just improved from my point of view. Because I also - it is just, yeah, like, yeah. So, in any event it's the point of view, like that ...</p>	<p>Open code: Change in perspective Deductive code: Cognitive changes in perceptions of situation Axial code: Reflection</p>	<p>Loneliness</p>	<p>Effective Because “improved from my point of view.”</p>
<p>Well that is, that is rather such a feeling - this discomfort, [sound of discomfort], what is</p>	<p>Open code: Do a hundred things</p>	<p>Feeling of discomfort</p>	<p>Effective</p>

that? Weird, I do hundreds of things, so that I don't feel it, so not reall	Deductive code: X Axial code: Distractions		Because “so that I don't feel it”
Uh ... to accept it. Well, to really try to feel and to accept it. Without any - although it's difficult - without any evaluation. Because I've [halt] made the experience myself that the more one accepts this, the more one says "yes", the less bad it will [halt] be.	Open code: Accept it Deductive code: Acceptance Axial code: Acceptance	Loneliness	Effective Because “the more one accepts this, the more one says "yes", the less bad it will [halt] be.”
And on - on - to also do something against it. So... to [...] friends. [jokingly] To, to look for new friends, haha. Somehow - something ... to find some course, for example, where one maybe - well - would find people who think similarly when... Dancing or yoga or, I don't know, pottery... It doesn't matter. Well, somehow, take the initiative that one gets to know someone, for example.	Open code: take the initiative - a course - dancing - yoga - pottery Deductive code: Personal development Axial code: Solitary involvement	Loneliness	Effective Because answer to ‘which advice would you give to that person?’
There was a period when the two of us were together, but we felt lonelier. Whereas now, our relationship is better and maybe in some way it's strengthened, namely as a result of this distance that we gave ourselves. It wasn't a pleasant decision - neither for me nor for him, but now, we both understand that it's a good thing because um, people sometimes are healing and they need their souls to be connected, not their bodies. Sometimes, when you live with someone, it doesn't mean that you're close or that you're not lonely, or anything.	Open code: Distancing yourself from others Deductive code: X Axial code: Solitude	Loneliness when being with others	Effective Because “it's a good thing because um, people sometimes are healing and they need their souls to be connected, not their bodies”
I felt alone because there was no... I was missing a part of me, I was missing what actually gives a person the feeling of being fulfilled. And that's not in work and it's not in these things. It's not in success and in how many people there are around you, at least for me, that's not the case, maybe it's different for other people.	Open code: X Deductive code: X Axial code: X	Being unfulfilled	X
Yes of course, I always turn to music or sport or uh do my own stuff, my own things.	Open code: - music - sport - do own stuff	Loneliness	Effective Because answer to the question ‘did you do

	Deductive code: Leisure and extracurricular activities Axial code: Solitary involvement		anything to make you feel better or to make you feel less lonely?'
And to know that they always have themselves and that they can find the things that make them happy. So just to attract, um, to attract happiness without feeling lonely.	Open code: Find things that make you happy Deductive code: Leisure and extracurricular activities Axial code: Solitary involvement	Loneliness	Effective Because "they can find the things that make them happy"
When my mother was unwell for a few months - this lasted a few months, it was horrible - I finally thought it had passed, I managed to overcome it - because the whole time, like, I have energy, I know I'm dealing with it on my own - I felt bad on the inside and I really felt lonely then, since I couldn't share [my feelings about] this with many of my loved ones. Like, she was hiding it, and I was trying to help her on my own the entire time. But the moment when everything calmed down, then this loneliness just... I mean, it comes like an after-effect. It was very odd and for two, three, four weeks, it was straight up a nightmare, um... Maybe in moments like this, loneliness actually helps - like, a person sometimes needs to reserve themselves, to be alone with themselves, to deal with these things, to talk to themselves alone. Maybe in moments like this, loneliness is a bit of a helper in dealing with these things. That is, while I was lonely, I wanted to talk to someone about this problem, but I couldn't. Afterwards, I actually suddenly realised that I have to have a talk with myself, to deal with my own emotions and with what is happening deep inside me. So, sometimes this is useful [laughs]: a person admitting to themselves that they are lonely. But there's nothing bad in being lonely and finding oneself alone for a bit. Yeah.	Open code: Reserve yourself Deductive code: X Axial code: Solitude Open code: Deal with own emotions Deductive code: Inner search Axial code: Reflection	Not being able to share feelings	Effective Because "loneliness is a bit of a helper in dealing with these things. [...] But there's nothing bad in being lonely and finding oneself alone for a bit."

<p>And so, when I started to work on this thing, I realised that, um... it's okay to be alone, like, without people around me, um... I even prefer it. That is, when I start feeling lonely, now I prefer to stay alone for a bit, without anyone around me. If I'm somewhere with friends, I prefer, if I don't feel okay, to leave, to stay by myself for a bit, because this just prolongs my agony, so to say. That is, I feel lonely, but if someone is constantly saying things around me but inside I have some thoughts that I want to deal with - and at some point, this chaos of internal and external voices begins [smiles] and... I prefer to remain alone.</p>	<p>Open code: be alone and deal with thoughts Deductive code: Inner search Axial code: Reflection</p>	<p>Loneliness when being with others</p>	<p>Effective Because "it's okay to be alone, like, without people around me, um... I even prefer it."</p>
<p>I started practising "hygiene" towards the people close to me. That is, having many people around you doesn't mean you're not lonely, because it happens. There have been instances of a heavy moment when I'm with a very big group of people, but just like that... We're at completely different levels in life, they talk about one thing, I [talk about] another, and at some point, you realise, "What am I doing among these people, like, we don't fit in any way" and in that moment, you realise that you have to change the environment a bit - otherwise you're neither helping yourself nor are you helping them. Um, and it's very important that a person realises this eventually and is not afraid of removing all the friends around them, but keeps their closest ones. Like, now, years later, I have fewer friends, I see fewer friends, like, we're all busy, but, um... I know that we are very close and I feel very comfortable with them. I've never felt lonely with them. Whereas, when I think about before - when I was surrounded by, like, "Sulyo and Pulyo" in Bulgarian [equivalent to the idiom "Tom, Dick and Harry"], it was just a nightmare. That's when a person starts losing themselves. Like, you think that you are a certain person, someone from the outside comes along, they change you a bit - especially if you're a bit more vulnerable, weaker. You start forming a different personality to be similar to them, to fit in. And at some point, you drift away from yourself and you're completely different then.</p>	<p>Open code: 'hygiene': removing friends Deductive code: Interactional changes Axial code: Interactional changes</p>	<p>Losing yourself</p>	<p>Effective Because "I have fewer friends, [...] I know that we are very close and I feel very comfortable with them. I've never felt lonely with them."</p>

<p>Like, you can't recognise yourself. And when a person drifts away so much from themselves, this loneliness is very hard to fix. If you change your true self, it's very difficult to find it afterwards. But when you find it [smiles], then a person doesn't fall into such moments of loneliness because they know that they can always have a talk with themselves in peace [laughs], if necessary. Yeah, it turned out long [laughs].</p>			
<p>First, I immediately have a light-bulb moment that I have to get a grip on my health, because I know that always [laughs], a period like this is followed by feeling very bad health-wise. Um, when I have such a very lonely period, I try to get myself pumped to do some kind of sport, that's important to me. It doesn't always work out, but it happens at least a little, um... Hmm... Watching movies. It's not that it helps me deal with the problem but it rather calms me down somehow. It calms me down. [...]going to zumba, for example, or something else, uh... Tiny things like that that simply make me feel good.</p>	<p>Open code: Sports: zumba Deductive code: Leisure and extracurricular activities Axial code: Solitary involvement</p>	Loneliness	<p>Effective Because "It calms me down. [...] Tiny things like that that simply make me feel good."</p>
<p>Pavel was not there and I literally had no one to talk to. Studentski grad (Student City - a neighbourhood) was far, and I knew that there, the Christmas tree was up. And one night, I went into the kitchen, I turned the lights off, and I just had absolutely no one to talk to. And at that moment, I felt very lonely. I felt terrible. That was the moment I decided to leave Sofia and come here, despite all the opportunities Sofia was giving me - as a city, for a better career, a better job. All that was because of the person I wanted to be with, the person I loved, and who I thought would be a main figure in my life. That's why I turned everything upside down. When I came back to Svishtov, I had to repeat the first year of university. I had to study a lot, I had a lot of exams, but I made it. However, because of that, I had delayed studies and had to study for five years, not four.[...]It was not easy for me to take that decision to come back. It was not easy to convince my parents that I have to come back and that I won't just drop out but</p>	<p>Open code: Deciding to be with a loved one Deductive code: Characterological changes Axial code: Characterological changes</p>	Alone on Christmas Eve	<p>Effective Because "But despite everything - I made it. Because I really wanted it."</p>

I'll actually graduate. But despite everything - I made it. Because I really wanted it.			
When he was coming home, he didn't talk with me that much. He was going to his room and watched something on his computer. I, on the other hand, lay on my favorite couch in the living room and distracted myself - watched TV, some fun TV shows. But, yeah, that was a period of time of my relationship in which I felt misunderstood. I shared very little with my husband.	Open code: Distracting yourself watching TV Deductive code: Leisure and extracurricular activities Axial code: Distractions	Feeling misunderstood by husband	X
Even when I'm alone, I do it. I was used to this since I was little: my father took me to the stores a lot, just to look around in grocery stores. I go and I see some kind of new wafer bar and I buy it because I am interested to try it. It's new, I have to try everything that's new [laughs]. So yeah, when I was a student in Sofia, I went to a big store very often. I caught a bus or a trolley or whatever, I went to a mall and there, I saw Piccadilly or Billa, something of the sort, and I went to those stores. Those were the things that I could buy. Now, I can't say that, as a woman, I don't like clothes, jewellery and so on, but I also like these things. It was more accessible to me and I needed it -we people need to eat after all. So, I used to go to a mall or a bigger store and I spent a lot of time [there]. Yes, I might even have spent hours [there], but it was interesting for me to look around. I liked something, I bought it, I ate, I enjoyed it and this was [one] of the things that helped me deal with loneliness.	Open code: Go to the grocery store Deductive code: Daily responsibility Axial code: Solitary involvement	Loneliness	Effective Because “, I enjoyed it and this was [one] of the things that helped me deal with loneliness.”
But I also ride the bike, I love it. When I don't have someone to talk to [...]Anyways, but I like cycling. I like it a lot. I go somewhere, maybe even out of town. During summer, [in] the field, when the grass comes out and the field flowers bloom, it smells very nice. I breathe, so to say, with all my senses and so, I also like this a lot: cycling, being somewhere in nature, going for walks.	Open code: do something solitary - cycling - being in nature - going for a walk Deductive code: Axial code:	Loneliness	Effective Because “I like it a lot.”
So I make sure that these periods of time when I feel lonely are not very long. And I always find some kind of activity so that I don't feel lonely. I told you: just looking	Open code: Some kind of activity	Loneliness	Effective Because “so that I don't feel lonely.”

around in a store or, if you will, something of that sort, but... I can get out of this situation	Deductive code: Daily responsibility Axial code: Solitary involvement		
It disappeared when I got home and I couldn't stop doing hiccups. And then I got mad at hiccups -so, like, from one pain to another. I just wanted to get rid of the hiccups. It (the loneliness) accompanied me, but... When I feel lonely, it accompanies me for a pretty long time until something else happens and my mind is distracted.	Open code: Distracting my mind Deductive code: X Axial code: Distractions	Feeling unseen by friends	Effective Because "It disappeared"
Like, the "loneliness demon" wakes up and will tear me to pieces. That's how I felt and I really tried to set things in the evenings that I wouldn't need to feel the loneliness. And I was saying to myself: "Ok, on Wednesday night, I'm at drama class. Tuesday night, I'm at the youth organization - like, I was going out of the boarding school to go to the neighborhood. And coming back, I was trying to set as many things as I could in the evenings - so that I wouldn't be with myself at night.	Open code: Fill time - drama class - youth organization - boarding school Deductive code: X Axial code: Distractions	Unable to sleep	X
I talked earlier about high school. So, there, it was really important for me to be busy. I will be busy busy busy. And I will just throw the sense of loneliness to the side. I mean, like, I won't deal with it. The best thing is to escape from it	Open code: Be busy Deductive code: X Axial code: Distractions	Loneliness	Maladaptive Because "I won't deal with it. The best thing is to escape from it."
So, first of all, be busy. And maybe, that's the answer... now, to be busy can mean different things – sometimes, it is just going to a movie with friends or just being in an activity, and sometimes it's... school or work	Open code: An activity - a movie - school / work Deductive code: Daily responsibility Axial code: Solitary involvement	Loneliness	X
The second way, which I prefer, is really to focus. I mean, like, actually face the sense of loneliness and create from it. Whether it's writing stories - I write for the drawer, but I write short stories and poetry. Whether it's to write or play music, to compose from that	Open code: Creating from loneliness - writing stories and poetry - playing music - using art	Loneliness	Effective Because "actually face the sense of loneliness and create from it.

<p>sense of loneliness. I really like doing it. I play the piano, too, again – amateurish, but again, I love using art</p>	<p>Deductive code: Cognitive changes in perceptions of situation Axial code: Reflection</p>		<p>[...] I really like doing it.”</p>
<p>and the third answer/way is God. I forgot, [to God] I’m sorry. I’m in a period where I’m not that strong – like, religiously. Like, I’m on the spectrum of the religious but I have to say that I didn’t mention it and it was a really meaningful part. From time immemorial, God was kind of a solace. As a dad, friend, that is always there. I was talking with him a lot. I still sometimes talk with him also – like, it’s a mood issue, if I believe in him or not. I don’t want to say that he’s my teddy bear, but God is without a doubt an address that I get help from in this case.</p>	<p>Open code: God Deductive code: Religion and faith Axial code: Religion and faith</p>	Loneliness	<p>Effective Because “God is without a doubt an address that I get help from in this case.”</p>
<p>I think that I started to understand by experience how good it was for me and [because of] the interesting hobbies I picked up. And I did things that I had never had the time to do, and I was fulfilled with my studies, [...] and caused me to feel confident in my decision - even though they [parents] felt that I should have stayed in the army, it didn't matter.</p>	<p>Open code: Picking up hobbies Deductive code: Leisure and extracurricular activities Axial code: Solitary involvement Open code: Fulfilled with studies Deductive code: Personal development Axial code: Solitary involvement</p>	Feeling unseen by parents	<p>Effective Because “I started to understand by experience how good it was for me [...] caused me to feel confident in my decision.”</p>
<p>The first thing is that I started to sing in a choir - at Shalem College, there is a choir, and I started to sing. And it gave me a way to express my feelings in a way that words cannot. Simply to sing and listen to the harmony of the voices, and be in it - this really helped me. [...] So, the choir gave me this structure [...] So, I found many channels through which I could release everything that</p>	<p>Open code: Sing in choir Deductive code: Personal development Axial code: Solitary involvement</p>	Loneliness	<p>Effective Because “it gave me a way to express my feelings [...] gave me this structure.”</p>

was weighing on me. So that I wouldn't get to the point where I would stay in my room and be depressed. It's essentially about releasing and freeing whatever you can.			
to fill my evening minute by minute - literally like a baby: now we are doing this, then this. And this is how I went over it in my head every second: what do I need to do next, and then - in 5 minutes.	Open code: Fill time Deductive code: X Axial code: Distractions	Loneliness	X
And I began to run, because I had a lot of anger with regard to the breakup, as well as other feelings. And I felt that it freed me and helped me let go... [...]So, I found many channels through which I could release everything that was weighing on me. So that I wouldn't get to the point where I would stay in my room and be depressed. It's essentially about releasing and freeing whatever you can.	Open code: Running Deductive code: Leisure and extracurricular activities Axial code: Solitary involvement	Break up	Effective Because "it freed me and helped me let go."
I also began to volunteer at the Jerusalem Open House for Pride and Tolerance. It was somewhat therapeutic because I had to tell my personal story and children would ask questions about the experience of coming out of the closet, and things like that. And it allowed me to channel my anger and difficult feelings towards something that might contribute to society. So, I found many channels through which I could release everything that was weighing on me. So that I wouldn't get to the point where I would stay in my room and be depressed. It's essentially about releasing and freeing whatever you can.	Open code: Volunteering Deductive code: Personal development Axial code: Solitary involvement	Loneliness	Effective Because "it allowed me to channel my anger and difficult feelings towards something that might contribute to society."
I was obsessed with filling my schedule. So that I didn't spend a second alone. Because being alone caused me to go to terrible places, that I had never experienced before. So, I tried extremely hard to not be alone.	Open code: Fill time Deductive code: X Axial code: Solitude	Loneliness	Maladaptive Because "being alone caused me to go to terrible places."
I don't feel like it's a failure to be alone. I find a lot of satisfaction in it. Suddenly, I can process things by myself, reflect on what happened to me - without it being a response to someone else, rather by myself. [...]And suddenly, I have a new-found affection for being with myself - to the extent that I don't want to lose it.	Open code: Reflect in solitude Deductive code: Inner search / reflection Axial code: Reflection	Loneliness	Effective Because "I can process things by myself, reflect on what happened to me"

<p>I started feeling this loneliness very badly, which caused me to break up and push people that I know away from me.</p> <p>L: Oh wait, do I understand correctly, so you felt lonely in the relationship and then you broke up?</p> <p>Yes, and that did make it worse, but for the better, I keep telling myself. And, what happens with me is, when I understand that I'm lonely, I do this really uh destructive thing of pushing people away. And um, I know that's not very recommended, but I can't take help. [smiles] I'm terrified of asking for help, uh seeming like a burden and things like that...</p>	<p>Open code: Push people away</p> <p>Deductive code: X</p> <p>Axial code: Solitude</p>	Loneliness	Maladaptive Because “and that did make it worse [...] I do this really uh destructive thing.”
<p>From the past year, it's been a bit hard because I can't seem to enjoy solitude as much, and understanding that I can't enjoy it makes me feel that I'm more lonely. [laughs] If that makes sense, but yeah - that-that happens. I can't enj- I used to enjoy being alone, but now I can't. [...]I do understand that loneliness doesn't stem [?] with just making friends, too. It's, a lot, personal, and I'm a bit afraid of that, being alone with myself.</p>	<p>Open code: Solitude</p> <p>Deductive code: X</p> <p>Axial code: Solitude</p>	Loneliness	Maladaptive Because “it makes me feel that I'm more lonely. [...]I'm a bit afraid of that, being alone with myself.”
<p>I wish I had, but uh, I do have slight distractions - I read, I write. I write most of the time - I write about my loneliness, I write poetry, or sometimes a persona that is me, but it's not me. Whatever, an idealized situation. I watch things. I try not to think about it as much, but that's also kind of self-destructive because when I keep trying to bury these thoughts away, they come right back when you least expect them. So, I find myself sitting in the office, working, 4 pm in the evening, and, feel like crying, because I know I am trying to bury these emotions, but - I try. That's what we all do anyway.</p>	<p>Open code: Distractions - reading - write poetry - watch things</p> <p>Deductive code: Leisure and extracurricular activities</p> <p>Axial code: Distractions</p>	Loneliness	Maladaptive Because “that's also kind of self-destructive because when I keep trying to bury these thoughts away, they come right back when you least expect them”
<p>I do with my writing - it sort of makes you - puts things into perspective. You sort of think about what's important. And when I try to dodge being lonely - I think of what I already have and what I don't. So, counting my blessings sort of thing. And it does make me feel better for the moment - when I start looking at things practically.</p>	<p>Open code: Writing</p> <p>Deductive code: Cognitive changes in perceptions of situation</p> <p>Axial code: Reflection</p>	Loneliness	Effective Because “puts things into perspective [...]it does make me feel better for the moment.”

<p>I just don't wanna be around people at that second, because I wanna figure out what I'm feeling - it's a mess. It's - when it's chaotic, I just don't want people around. I don't think that they can help. Because I- if I can't understand what I'm feeling, then I don't expect others to. And I don't have the um mental energy to explain.</p>	<p>Open code: Figure out feelings Deductive code: Inner search Axial code: Reflection</p>	<p>Loneliness</p>	<p>X</p>
<p>a couple of days ago, I started reading again. It's been a while since I read books and I was always a heavy reader - and uh, a couple of days ago, I started reading again. And I spent close to 3,5 hours reading and I hadn't thought about being lonely or anything during that time. And it felt great, because I was jumping into a hobby that I've always been doing and I'd given up for a while</p>	<p>Open code: Reading Deductive code: Personal development Axial code: Solitary involvement</p>	<p>Loneliness</p>	<p>Effective Because “And it felt great, because I was jumping into a hobby that I've always been doing and I'd given up for a while.”</p>
<p>So, oftentimes, we feel alone um because we think what we feel, we feel by ourselves and um, so - that's why I think reading is a comfort for me. Because most of the things that I see these personas in books feel, I feel, too, and it feels that there's some hand, across the world, putting- putting themselves on their - on my shoulder and saying: you're not alone. And if there's someone telling you that you're not alone, you're not feeling this on your own, I think it will help.</p>	<p>Open code: Feeling not alone because of reading Deductive code: Reassurance and positive outlook Axial code: Reflection</p>	<p>Loneliness</p>	<p>Effective Because “reading is a comfort for me. [...]I think it will help.”</p>
<p>I mean, my husband was not helping, I can tell that. So, I had to do everything myself and be alone. He would not go to work even after loafing around for six months - and he would still be at home. Due to problems like these, I had thoughts of living alone instead of living together. [...]When the problem started, I felt that I didn't need anybody: “I should live alone, I should be alone” - that's when it came to my mind.</p>	<p>Open code: Thinking of living alone Deductive code: X Axial code: Solitude</p>	<p>Being unsupported by husband</p>	<p>X</p>
<p>No, alone. I would be all alone by myself. I was not talking to anyone. Whenever I felt loneliness, I used to be alone by myself. I used to not talk to people properly. [...] Being alone helps me. During that time, I am a little cool and I won't take tension.</p>	<p>Open code: Be alone Deductive code: X Axial code: Solitude</p>	<p>Being unsupported by husband</p>	<p>Effective Because “Being alone helps me.”</p>
<p>At home, I will be alone. When I go to work, I will be alone - I won't talk to anyone. I just go</p>	<p>Open code: Work</p>	<p>Loneliness</p>	<p>Effective Because answer to question ‘Do</p>

to work and come back like usual. I won't do anything else.	Deductive code: Daily responsibility Axial code: Solitary involvement		you do anything else to feel less lonely? Will you just be alone?’
By then, I mean, I had moved to Bangalore. In Bangalore, I just got busy with life (neighbours).	Open code: Be busy Deductive code: X Axial code: Distractions	Passing of a family member	Effective Because answer to question ‘How did you become all right?’
So, I went to work. [...] I would wash clothes, vessels... like that, do household chores.	Open code: Work Deductive code: Daily responsibility Axial code: Solitary involvement	Loneliness	X
TV? Watching something on TV is like a normal thing.	Open code: TV Deductive code: Leisure and extracurricular activities Axial code: Solitary involvement	Loneliness	X
I used to keep myself cool without thinking about anything - free. Then I feel that my brain is within me (in the sense of self-aware / mindful).	Open code: be self-aware/ mindful Deductive code: Reflection Axial code: Reflection	Loneliness	Effective Because answer to question ‘Did you do anything to reduce your loneliness when it used to come and go?’
Uh, so I - again, I was not able to find people, which matched my mindset. I used to feel extremely lonely uh, back then. Uh, in the sense that, food - I someti- I used to have a food group. And that's when I started to explore different areas. I started stamp collecting, I started cycling. Cycling is one of the - the things that I still continue till day. Um, so... Yeah, I started exploring, you know, different options, just to get me out of this loneliness. Now, that I look back - I mean [not	Open code: Exploring areas - collecting stamps - cycling - photography Deductive code: Personal development Axial code: Solitary involvement	Not matching with people Loneliness during college	Effective Because “to get me out of this loneliness [...]it sort of helped me develop my personality.”

understandable] these things. Um, so, yeah, in a way, it sort of helped me develop my personality. Um, in a sense- I mean, that gave me an opportunity to explore different uh areas [...] I caught up with photography - due to the - some of the, almost the same reason as well.			
photography definitely helped me through - in college. So, I used to shoot events. So, people used to know me - which I used to feel happy about. Uh, again, the concept of uh validation. So, I used to get validation uh from them, which inherently made me happy. Um, so, yeah, that sort helped me back in college.	Open code: Photography Deductive code: Personal development Axial code: Solitary involvement	Loneliness during college	Effective Because “photography definitely helped me through.”
you would have wished that you had uh you had a boyfriend or a girlfriend uh you would also wish that you can be more of a, you know social magnet, uh, but that takes a lot of effort. So, my conscious choice was to not go there, but yes, I have felt lonely because of that. [L: Ok.] But I did not let it affect me a lot. [...] I did not distract myself, I said, it's more of a conscious decision. I know that: ok, this is not my priority right now, I have to focus- I have different things to focus on. So, focus on those things, get those things done. And things will eventually fall in place.	Open code: Conscious choice to be alone Deductive code: Characterological changes Axial code: Characterological changes	Missing a partner	X
second go-to place is uh, I like to read articles. Um, so, Quora has been one of the good sources. So, I can get lost in-in uh in-in reading up [...]Um, mostly because it distracts me. At that instant.	Open code: Distraction: reading Deductive code: Leisure and extracurricular activities Axial code: Distractions	Loneliness	Maladaptive in eliminating loneliness Effective in distracting Because “because it distracts me. At that instant.”
My advice is to just hang in there, things are gonna - uh, things are eventually gonna fall in place. Uh, and the reason that I say that is, eventually, we will accept it, uh, and we'll start working towards it.	Open code: accept it Deductive code: Acceptance Axial code: Acceptance	Loneliness	Effective Because answer to question ‘which advice you would give to a person who is feeling lonely?’

<p>Just feel positive about - try to look at the good side of things, out of whatever you've got. Look at the brighter side, and then uh try to work towards, improve on those um, brighter aspects. Go for positive reinforcement rather than uh negative reinforcement</p>	<p>Open code: Feel positive Deductive code: Reassurance and positive outlook Axial code: Reflection</p>	Loneliness	<p>Effective Because answer to question 'which advice you would give to a person who is feeling lonely?'</p>
<p>The positive side is that I learned to be self-dependent, or that I should help myself out of that feeling of loneliness. I should do something to socialize with people, and not to keep myself trapped in the box of loneliness. Uh... That I should fill my time with something: go out and so on, and never be alone.</p>	<p>Open code: be self-dependent Deductive code: Characterological changes Axial code: Characterological changes Open code: Fill time Deductive code: Leisure and extracurricular activities Axial code: Solitary involvement</p>	Loneliness	<p>Effective Because "that I should help myself out of that feeling of loneliness"</p>
<p>The thing I did is that I searched for something that I'd feel happy with when I do it, and I tried hard to reach it. [...]Uh... writing! Sometimes uh... I used to write when I felt depressed. Kind of diaries uh... that was one other thing that helped me. Instead of trapping these feelings inside, I wrote them down on paper.</p>	<p>Open code: Writing about feelings Deductive code: Inner search Axial code: Reflection</p>	Passing of a family member	<p>Effective Because "that was one other thing that helped me."</p>
<p>Uh... they shouldn't focus on that thought or that feeling. They should think of something that gets them busy and reverse all the negative feelings. I mean, either they express their feeling to someone</p>	<p>Open code: No focus on that feeling Deductive code: Reassurance and positive look Axial code: Reflection</p>	Loneliness	<p>Effective Because answer to question 'What advice would you give to someone who feels lonely?'</p>
<p>It was me. I mean, after the people had tried many times to help and failed, I started to say to myself: of course, I will not continue my life in this miserable way. So, I started to try to go out with people, do some activities I like to do - even if I had to do it alone because others didn't like this kind of activity. I started</p>	<p>Open code: Deciding not to be miserable Deductive code: Cognitive changes</p>	Break up	<p>Effective Because answer to question 'What helped you alleviate the feeling of loneliness?'</p>

<p>to sit and talk to people that are similar to me, and just random people. And that's it.</p>	<p>Axial code: Self change</p> <p>Open code: Do activities one likes</p> <p>Deductive code: Tasks one enjoys to do alone</p> <p>Axial code: Solitary involvement</p>		
<p>More than one thing. Maybe getting closer to God - that is the most important thing uh... I started to engage in voluntary work – like, helping people, meeting new people, new people that are totally unknown to me and who don't know anything about me. Um... I started to think positively. I started to set goals and try to achieve them. Uh... All of this made it possible for me to get out of the problem. Uh... I always try to think that this feeling of loneliness is just a feeling and that it is not the reality that I have to live in. That's why the situation changed. And getting closer to God had the biggest influence on eliminating these feelings of loneliness. [...]</p>	<p>Open code: God</p> <p>Deductive code: Religion and Faith</p> <p>Axial code: Religion and Faith</p> <p>Open code: Voluntary work</p> <p>Deductive code: Daily responsibilities</p> <p>Axial code: Solitary involvement</p> <p>Open code: Think positively</p> <p>Deductive code: Reassurance and positive outlook</p> <p>Axial code: Reflection</p>	Break up	Effective Because “All of this made it possible for me to get out of the problem. [...]the biggest influence on eliminating these feelings of loneliness’
<p>No, I can't talk about my feelings of loneliness with other people. I'm generally not the kind of person who uh... always complains! If I'm feeling lonely, I'm feeling lonely and that's it. So, I become very isolated. I feel that I cannot have a conversation or a discussion with anybody. So, I become isolated. If the person with whom I talk feels that I'm not alright, they may know. But if they don't notice, I don't talk about it.</p>	<p>Open code: Isolate</p> <p>Deductive code: X</p> <p>Axial code: Solitude</p>	Loneliness	Maladaptive Because “I'm feeling lonely and that's it.”
<p>They should get very close to God. Because this is the best thing to never get the feeling of loneliness. You feel that God is always with you, He always (God) enlightens your route.</p>	<p>Open code: God</p> <p>Deductive code: Religion and Faith</p>	loneliness	Effective Because “this is the best thing to never get

<p>[..]You should always think positively. Be so far away from negativity. And that's it! And for sure, you get close to God. This is more important than anything else</p>	<p>Axial code: Religion and Faith</p> <p>Open code: Think positively</p> <p>Deductive code: Reassurance and positive outlook</p> <p>Axial code: Reflection</p>		<p>the feeling of loneliness.”</p>
<p>Uh... I had a female friend who... somewhat liked us to participate in activities. That we do things somewhat... volunteering. That was a start of a new life. I got to know a new community and did lots of activities</p>	<p>Open code: Volunteering</p> <p>Deductive code: Daily responsibilities</p> <p>Axial code: Solitary involvement</p>	<p>Not being surrounded with the right people</p>	<p>Effective Because “That was a start of a new life.”</p>
<p>But for the close friend, I maybe had very high expectations and was eventually let down. But not by all of them (friends). [...] I have friends who meet these expectations, and for those who let me down before, they're still in my life. But I accepted the reality and that the problem was actually mine. And still, they're good people. They're not bad.</p>	<p>Open code: Accept reality</p> <p>Deductive code: Acceptance</p> <p>Axial code: Acceptance</p>	<p>Having friends who do not meet expectations</p>	<p>X</p>