

NEWS LESSON

Alone, but Not Lonely

BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What do you enjoy doing when you have time to yourself?
2. Would you be happy eating in a restaurant alone?
3. Do you prefer a quiet weekend or a busy one?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**disappointed**	☐	A	looked at two things to see how they are different
2	**delighted**	☐	B	very happy and pleased
3	**secretly**	☐	C	a test to find out if something is true
4	**crowded**	☐	D	full of people
5	**negative**	☐	E	without telling other people
6	**experiment**	☐	F	thinking hard so you do not make a mistake
7	**compared**	☐	G	sad because something did not happen as you wanted
8	**careful**	☐	H	bad, not hopeful

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

A free afternoon can feel wonderful or miserable. Researchers think part of the difference is what you already believe about being alone.

1 Imagine your plans for this evening are cancelled. Your phone is quiet and nobody needs anything from you. Are you disappointed, or are you secretly delighted?

2 Different people answer that question very differently, and so does the same person on different days. Psychologists separate two things that sound similar. Being alone is a situation: there is nobody with you. Loneliness is a feeling, and it appears when you want more connection than you have. You can feel lonely in a crowded room.

3 In 2025, researchers at the University of Michigan published a study in the journal Nature Communications about how we think about time alone. First they looked at how newspapers write about it. They read 144 American articles published between 2020 and 2022, and found that the picture was almost always negative. The articles were about ten times more likely to say that being alone was harmful than to say it was good for you.

4 Then they looked at what ordinary people believe. People who think time alone is harmful reported feeling lonelier after spending time by themselves. People who think it can be good reported feeling less lonely after exactly the same thing. The researchers also compared countries, and the countries where people felt lonelier were the countries where beliefs about being alone were more negative.

5 In one experiment, people who read about the benefits of spending time alone became more positive about it afterwards.

6 A second paper, published in 2026 by a team of Czech researchers, adds another piece. They argue that the difference is not how many hours you spend alone but whether you chose them. Time alone that you picked for your own reasons tends to rest you. Time alone that was forced on you tends not to.

7 The researchers are careful here. Most of their everyday evidence cannot prove that beliefs cause the feeling, and the effect may work in both directions. Lonely people may think badly of solitude because they are lonely.

8 Still, there is something useful in it. Time to yourself does not have to be a problem to solve. You do not have to use it to improve yourself. Reading, cooking, walking or doing nothing at all can be enough. And if you have ever felt that an empty evening was a failure, it is worth asking where you learned that.

Sources: Nature Communications, How people think about being alone shapes their experience of loneliness; Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science, Time Alone: Solitude and Loneliness from the Self-Determining Perspective. Picture: .

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. A person can feel lonely when other people are present. T F NG
2. The newspaper articles usually described being alone as good for you. T F NG
3. The article names the newspapers that were studied. T F NG
4. The researchers say their everyday evidence cannot prove that beliefs cause the feeling. T F NG
5. The 2026 paper was written by Czech researchers. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

ancient	benefits	cancelled	connection	evidence	forced	rental

1. If your plans are _____ , you suddenly have a free evening.
2. Loneliness is the feeling that you want more _____ with other people than you have.
3. A scientist needs good _____ before saying that something is true.
4. Many people enjoy the _____ of a quiet evening, such as feeling rested.
5. Nobody chose it, so they felt _____ to spend the evening alone.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Psychologists _____ two things that sound similar. (SEPARATE)
2. Researchers at the University of Michigan _____ a study in 2025. (PUBLISH)
3. People who think time alone is harmful _____ feeling lonelier. (REPORT)
4. People who read about the benefits _____ more positive afterwards. (BECOME)
5. The study _____ that most articles were negative. (SHOW)

7 Language focus: prepositions

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Some verbs and adjectives need one small word after them. Learn the pair together, not the word alone.

about	against	between	by	for	in	under

1. There is a big difference _____ being alone and being lonely.
2. She spent the evening _____ herself and was happy.
3. Many people worry _____ spending an evening alone.
4. Some people feel lonely _____ a crowded room.
5. A quiet evening can be good _____ you.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Is being alone the same as being lonely? Explain the difference.
2. Newspapers usually write about being alone as a bad thing. Why do you think that is?
3. What is your favourite way to spend an afternoon by yourself?

9 Role-play: a cancelled evening

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the flatmate who wants a quiet night

Your friend cancelled your plans for tonight. You're delighted and want to stay in alone. Your flatmate wants company. Explain why time alone matters to you and suggest a fair compromise.

Student B · the flatmate who wants company

Your plans for tonight have fallen through and you feel a little lonely. Ask your flatmate to do something together. Explain why, and listen to their reasons.

Useful phrases

- I was really looking forward to a quiet night.
- It's not that I don't like your company.
- Could we do something together tomorrow instead?
- I'd rather spend the evening on my own.
- I don't want you to feel lonely.
- How about a short walk and then I'm yours?

Afterwards, tell the class: did you agree on a plan, and who gave way more?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 G · 2 B · 3 E · 4 D · 5 H · 6 C · 7 A · 8 F

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 T

5 Vocabulary

1 cancelled · 2 connection · 3 evidence · 4 benefits · 5 forced

6 Verb forms

1 separate · 2 published · 3 reported · 4 became · 5 showed

7 Language focus

1 between · 2 by · 3 about · 4 in · 5 for

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