Mapping Your Solitude
(Please print out this section)

The following steps will sharpen your awareness about:
- the types of solitude you experience
- how you balance solitude and human community

Step 1: Types of Solitude

Directions: Please circle the types of solitude you experience:

1. Solitude as Anonymity – Because you are alone, you may act in whatever ways you feel like at the moment, without concern for social niceties or what others might think.

2. Solitude as Creativity – Being alone stimulates novel ideas or innovative ways of expressing yourself, whether actually in art, poetry or intellectual pursuits, or whimsically in daydreaming with a purpose.

3. Solitude as Diversion – You fill the time alone by watching television, reading a book, surfing the internet, or engaging in other distracting activities.

4. Solitude as Inner Peace – While alone, you feel calm and relaxed free from the pressures of everyday life.

5. Solitude as Intimacy – Although alone, you feel especially close to someone you care about (for example, an absent friend or lover, or perhaps a deceased relative such as a beloved grandparent); the absence of the person only strengthens your feeling of closeness.

6. Solitude as Loneliness – You feel self-conscious, anxious or depressed, you long for interpersonal contact.

7. Solitude as Problem Solving – Aloneness provides the opportunity to think about specific problems or decisions you are facing and you attempt to come to some resolution.
8. **Solitude as Self Discovery** – By focusing attention on yourself, you gain insight into your fundamental values and goals and you come to realize your unique strengths and weaknesses.

9. **Solitude as Spirituality** – While alone, you have a mystic–like experience, for example, a sense of transcending everyday concerns, of being a part of something grander than yourself: Such experiences are sometimes interpreted within a religious context (e.g. as being close to God) but they also can be entirely secular (e.g. as being in harmony with a social or natural order).

*Adapted from Long, et. al (University of Massachusetts) PSPB, Vol. 29 No. 5, May 2003 578-583.*

• Please write the type(s) of solitude you feel most drawn to, the one you would most like to experience: ____________________________________________.

**Step 2:**

**Your Patterns of Choice**

A. At this time in my life I would prefer to have:
   - □ a. more solitude.
   - □ b. more involvement with others.
   - □ c. other: _____________________________________________________

B. I seem to keep about the right balance of time between solitude and being with others:
   - □ a. most of the time
   - □ b. rarely
   - □ c. other: _____________________________________________________

C. Needing to choose between solitude and being with others leaves me feeling frustrated.
   - □ a. often
   - □ b. not often
   - □ c. other: _____________________________________________________

D. I feel upset when I need to choose between solitude and being with others.
   - □ a. usually
   - □ b. not usually
   - □ c. other: _____________________________________________________

E. My everyday choices between solitude and being with others are influenced by feelings of shame or guilt.
   - □ a. often
   - □ b. not often
   - □ c. other: _____________________________________________________

F. My everyday choices between solitude and being with others are influenced by feelings of social pressures and expectations.
   - □ a. usually
   - □ b. not usually
   - □ c. other: _____________________________________________________
• After considering these questions, you may decide to work on re-balancing solitude and community.

**Step 3: Balancing solitude and community (conclusions)**

1. What type(s) of solitude, listed in Step 1, would you go to some effort to experience?

________________________________________________________________________

2. In what places, situations or conditions are you likely to find solitude?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3. If you would like to find a better balance between solitude and community:
   A. What are some **resources** (internal and external) that you have for doing this?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

B. What **obstacles** (internal and external) make it difficult to do this?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

4. What would you need to do, on an everyday and long term basis, to create more solitude, or a better balance into your life?
   
   *(Remember that re-balancing requires working things out with those around you, as kindly as possible. Others are affected when you shift your balance between solitude and community.)*

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

5. What is your next step?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

©Robert C. Smith, Ph. D. The Solitude Project, August, 2011, robertcharlessmithphd@gmail.com