



## SOLITUDE PROJECT

### 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?

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

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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?

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

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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.)*

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5. What is your next step?

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