



Chapter 7 – On Loneliness

EXERCISES

1. Spread the Sunshine

Start small and work your way up if need be.

- If you work in an office, maybe start bringing in treats once a week
- Be kind to people at checkouts, even strike up a genuine conversation (albeit short, especially if there are people behind you in the queue)
- Smile at people warmly now and again and expect nothing in return.

2. Here's a more challenging one. It's what my friend Jamie Smart calls a 'Pizza Walk' from the exercise of opening oneself to social disapproval by doing something that would be considered weird. The original pizza walk is to walk into a place that does not serve pizza, like McDonald's, and insist on pizza. People were instructed to draw out the encounter as long as they could bear, or until the other person threatened to call the police, whichever came first.

Your niceness pizza walk is to:

- 1) Choose a street.
- 2) Think yourself into a really good mood. There are a number of ways to do this. One way is to imagine that everybody you're about to see really likes you and wishes you the best in the world.
- 3) Walk down your chosen street, corner to corner, and greet people warmly and genuinely.
- 4) Repeat as needed.

If this is too big a pizza walk for you, try something small, like saying hello to only one person, but repeated over whatever length of time is appropriate for you, like, the rest of your life.

3. Work

Additionally, if you have work colleagues, you may wish to revisit that 360 review exercise offered in Chapter 4. Although work relationships likely may not have room for deep intimacy, moving to healthier and appropriately intimate relationships at work can only make your workplace more enjoyable.

4. Spread sunshine at home:

If you have a family and are lonely, it could be most desirable to leave and make a different home for yourself and surround yourself with different people. Or it could be that the people you live with have a lot to offer, it's just that the dynamics you have contributed to creating between you shift you all down. Make a commitment to, as my mother put it, "Shit or get off the pot." When you make a decision, which you probably have already made but haven't given yourself permission for, ask yourself the following questions:

- What might the people in my family desire more of it from me that is healthy for me to give?
 - The filter here is 'healthy.' It is not about what is convenient, easy, or not scary. Nor is it about what would appease people who have no real and



personal interest in *your* deep and abiding happiness on *your* terms (Item 10 from Chapter 4, table on What love is).

- Ask yourself: How do I know? What would it be like to ask? If you do ask (and I highly suggest you do so when you are ready), how close were your guesses?
- Experiment. It's about choosing something better for all concerned, and you may be the first in the family with the moxie to really do something about it. Start giving more in ways that make sense for you and your family, and see what happens. When you're ready, ask for feedback, which may come to you anyway, particularly if you set about awkwardly shoving your 'kindnesses' at people.

A very important note: If you decide it is best for you to leave, very best wishes to you. I suggest you watch a movie called *War of the Roses* before you take any divorce action. In abusive scenarios, you may need assistance in making your escape plan. Plan carefully. Leaving is not about revenge or getting your last kick in. Nor is it about drowning in guilt in a hotel room or your friend's guest room or a bottle of cheap or expensive booze. It's about choosing something better for all concerned, and you're the first in the family with the moxie to really do something about it. Best wishes.