Abstract

- There is a dearth of research on the positive side of being alone (Long & Averill, 2003).
- Our study found that solitude could also be beneficial to one’s well-being with the help of mindfulness.

Introduction

- Some people can live relatively solitary lives and not feeling lonely (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010).
- Psychology research has yet to investigate the reasons why some individuals could be alone without feeling lonely, and even feel positive in some cases.
- Solitude is as much a self-contained state of mind as a quality of place, and this resembles the definition of mindfulness, that is, a state of consciousness marked by present-moment, nonjudgmental awareness (Salmon & Matarese, 2014).
- A recent review by Keng, Smoski, & Robins (2011) concluded that mindfulness brings about various positive psychological effects.
- Given the similarity in definitions between mindfulness and solitude, we hypothesize that solitude could also be beneficial with the help of mindfulness.

Measurements

- 65 participants (28 males, 37 females; Age 17 to 45, M_age = 21.14, SD_age = 4.358) answered the following measurements.

The Preference for Solitude Scale (PSS, Burger, 1995; M = 6.28, SD = 3.1, α = .77).

The Five Facets Mindfulness Scale (FFMQ, Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006; Overall Mindfulness: M = 121.4, SD = 13.7, α = .86; FFMQ-Describe: M = 22.3, SD = 4.06, α = .80; FFMQ-Observe, M = 26.3, SD = 5.36, α = .85; FFMQ-Act with Awareness: M = 25.01, SD = 4.45, α = .77; FFMQ-Nonreactivity: M = 22.1, SD = 2.71, α = .44; FFMQ-Nonjudgmental: M = 22.5, SD = 5.09, α = .84).

The 5-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS, Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Grifffins, 1985; M = 22.1, SD = 4.93, α = .80).

Correlations Among Key Variables:

- Preference for solitude did not correlate with any of the trait mindfulness or subjective well-being variables.
- Of all the mindfulness facets, the combined index of overall mindfulness, r = .318, p = .01, the ability to describe inner experience, r = .321, p = .009, the ability to observe sensations, r = .316, p = .01, and nonreactive to inner experience, r = .289, p = .02, are significantly correlated with subjective well-being.

Results

Did general trait mindfulness moderate the relationship between preference for solitude and subjective well-being?

- We found a preference for solitude X overall mindfulness interaction, F(3, 61) = 5.124, p = .003.
- Among high mindful individuals, preference for solitude was positively related to subjective well-being, t(61) = 2.01, β = .54, p < .05.
- Among low mindful individuals, preference for solitude was related to lower subjective well-being, t(61) = .211, β = -.58, p < .05.

Did specific dimension(s) of mindfulness moderate the relationship between preference for solitude and subjective well-being?

- We found a preference for solitude X ability to describe inner experience interaction, F(3, 61) = 6.459, p = .001.
- Among individuals with higher ability to describe inner experiences, preference for solitude was positively related to subjective well-being, t(61) = 2.13, β = .53, p < .05.
- The slope for individuals with lower ability to describe inner experiences was not significant.

Conclusion

- Our findings suggest that solitude, with the help of mindfulness, can be beneficial.
- The ability to put feelings into words may play a special role for people who enjoy solitude to buffer against negativity.
- Future research should investigate the underlying mechanisms that facilitate the relationship between preference for solitude and subjective well-being.

References


