

Expository Essay Examples Middle School

Example 1: Loneliness and Its Effects

Everyone probably knows the feeling of isolation, when the entire world seems to be behind a glass wall: one can see people on the other side, interact and talk to them, live a more or less normal life—but feel alone and forgotten somewhere deep inside. In a world where communication is the new god, where extroverted behaviors are deemed healthy and normal, and where everything calls a person to belong to a certain group, being and feeling alone often seems wrong. There is nothing bad in needing solitude; from time to time, all of us need to spend some time on our own. However, solitude is rather a voluntary choice; when this condition becomes chronic and undesired, when a person feels the impossibility of establishing contact with others, this is already something many people around the world fear strongly: this is loneliness.

What exactly is loneliness? A more narrow definition suggests that loneliness is the condition when a person is not surrounded by other people, spends most of his or her time alone, and maintains little-to-no social contact. However, anyone who had at least once experienced the condition of loneliness knows that it is possible to be surrounded by friends or family, stay in the thick of things, and still feel isolated. In fact, the statistics shows about 60% of people who feel lonely are married, which is a good illustration of the thesis that loneliness does not depend on the environment, that the amount and variety of social connections and/or relationships do not necessarily save us from it. (Psychology Today).

A better understanding of loneliness can be achieved from the analysis of the needs and desires standing behind it—or, to be precise, the impossibility to satisfy these needs. According to Baumeister and Leary, every person has a basic need to belong to a certain group; this need is as significant and natural as the need to eat, to sleep, or to feel safe. However, simply belonging on its own does not satisfy the need: it is important that a person can form strong, close, and stable interpersonal relationships, and maintain them: only in this case the sense of belonging will be full. This makes sense even from the evolutionary point of view: staying together with other people was a guarantee of physical survival in ancient times. Continuing the parallel between emotional and physical (or basic) needs, our bodies are often wiser than our minds: when there is a lack or a surplus of something, our bodies react appropriately. Sensations (such as hunger, heat, and so on) and emotions are the signals our bodies send to our minds in order to alert them about these shortages and surpluses. Respectively, loneliness is an emotion which signals that the need of belonging is not satisfied, or that we are not getting the relationships (or the quality of already existing relationships) that we want (Web of Loneliness). This often seems irrational: for example, a person can have a lot of friends and see them often, he or she can be married and have children, have no problems with colleagues at work—everything is seemingly fine, but the sense of loneliness is still there, and it is important to understand why it is present, what is lacking.

Being in strong and close relationships affects our mental health beneficially; being alone for a long period of time can lead to a number of negative consequences, both on mental and physiological levels. In particular, loneliness can lead to depression (which is a dangerous mental condition on its own), a feeling of hopelessness, low self-esteem, an impaired ability for social interactions and work, suicidal tendencies, poor sleep, the sense of defeat, and helplessness. These sensations form a vicious circle—nurturing each other, they aggravate the situation of a lonely person, preventing him or her from getting out of this span on his or her own. Not only the emotional sphere, but also bodily functions are affected by loneliness. Studies show that lonely people face cardiovascular diseases more frequently than those enjoying strong and stable relationships with other people; other effects include the loss of weight, hormonal imbalances, the inhibition of the immune system, low resistance to infections and inflammations, dementia (in old age), and the degradation of bones and muscle tissue (The Doctor's Tablet). All this does not mean that a person starts experiencing all these negative effects every time he or she feels lonely; however, these effects accumulate during prolonged isolation, "chronic" loneliness; therefore, it is important to not try to deal with this condition on one's own, and seek professional help.

In fact, there are many effective ways to treat loneliness. Many people think that it is enough to increase the amount of social contacts, go out more often, and loneliness will be dealt with. However, loneliness is more about a person's ability to form close relationships and bond with others, rather than about how often one is exposed to other people. Similar to other negative mental conditions, the first important step is to let yourself feel loneliness, and admit that you would like to live differently than you do. People often try to overpower their loneliness; they either tend to not treat it as something significant, considering it to be a weakness, or even deny that they are feeling lonely. When the problem is accepted and defined, it is recommended to start attending local psychotherapy sessions; cognitive-behavioral therapy usually provides solid results in treating loneliness, although other psychology schools, such as gestalt therapy can also be efficient, try finding what suits you the best. If you cannot afford attending a psychotherapist, consider utilizing a variety of relaxation and stress-relief techniques such as meditation, muscle relaxation training, guided mental imagery, or comforting self-talk. Pet therapy can be helpful as well; in fact, many people intuitively feel the need to have a living being nearby, whom they would be able to take care of, so owning a dog, cat, bird, or even a lizard can be a nice way to cope with loneliness (Psychologist Anywhere, Anytime). In many western countries, especially in the United States, it is extremely popular to prescribe medicine in order to deal with mental conditions; however, it is important to remember that loneliness is rather an emotional condition, not a biochemical one, so if you decide to take pills, it might help you inhibit unpleasant and painful feelings, but it will not solve your problem. Pills might be helpful if you are already suffering from depression as a result of loneliness—and even in this case, you should consider going to psychotherapy sessions.

Loneliness is not the same as solitude. The latter is a voluntary act of isolation from a society in order to refresh oneself, sort out one's thoughts, and take a break from intense social

interactions. Loneliness, in its turn, is a chronic and undesired condition when a person is unable (due to a number of reasons) to establish and maintain contact and close, stable relationships with surrounding people. Prolonged loneliness can be dangerous, since it can cause a variety of emotional and physiological problems. However, the good news is that loneliness can be treated effectively, mostly with the help of a professional psychotherapist.

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Example 2: The Fear of Success

Everyone has probably heard about the fear of failure. In fact, it has become such a popular explanation and excuse for not doing something that it often sounds almost trivial—even though it is a real psychological condition causing a lot of distress to those who suffer from it. At the same time, there is another, somewhat similar phobia which is often overlooked or neglected as insignificant: the fear of success.

At first glance, it might seem absurd: why would anyone be afraid of succeeding in his or her own life? Why would someone avoid—subconsciously or intentionally—accomplishing achievements, reaching goals, and fulfilling their dreams? The devil, as always, is in the details: the number of reasons for a person with the fear of success to worry is large. Unlike some people might think, many of these reasons are rational. Let us take a closer look at what may cause such a phobia and how it manifests itself.

To start with, let us figure out what success means. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines success as a favorable and/or desired outcome (Merriam-Webster). Expanding this definition, we may say that succeeding means achieving a desired result in a certain enterprise, activity, occupation, and so on. Each person has his or her criteria of success, but rather often they can be reduced to several categories: achieving a certain level of financial welfare; social recognition, fame, or popularity; professional growth and development; a happy marriage and parenthood, and so on. What is common for any form of success is that it can change a person’s life—and this is one of the main reasons why people can be so afraid of it.

All of us are familiar with the expression “to get out of one’s comfort zone.” Usually, it implies doing something unusual for us, something new, risky, etc. This is exactly what people with the fear of success are unlikely and unwilling to do. Success implies doing new things, being recognized in new ways, new workloads, new contacts, new demands and responsibilities—in other words, in case a person succeeds, there is too much novelty to deal with. Besides, getting into the spotlight implies being scrutinized, criticized, and discussed (99U). Public opinion can be harsh, even if “public” means ten people more than usual. Not everyone is prepared for such attention: even the fear of standing out, being a part of an ancient survival strategy, finds a way to manifest itself in such peculiar forms. It is much safer to stay on charted territory, going through the same routine over and over again, but keeping a habitual and comfortable lifestyle intact.

A part of this fear of novelty and change is related to personality. An individual who fears success might feel he or she is going to change beyond recognition upon becoming successful. To some extent, this is similar to the fear of death: seizing to exist as the person who you are familiar with—and being “reborn” as a different individual, with a different set of values, habits, surrounding, occupations, and so on. This fear comes from a premise that the changes success brings require a person to completely abandon his or her older self (99U). In reality, change implies developing new qualities and habits atop of older ones. Your “older” personality does not disappear, you do not stop existing—you just acquire new traits, skills, and outlooks.

Sometimes the roots of the fear of success go deep into childhood traumas. If you were a talented child capable of writing poems or painting, for example, your peers might not accept you. Children can be cruel—not because they are evil, but because they have yet to learn compassion, empathy, and morals. So, they can attack those who stand out: because of fear, a lack of understanding, jealousy, or for other reasons. Anyways, a person who suffered from bullying in childhood may associate standing out, which success often implies, with being ostracized, and may try to avoid it by all means (LonerWolf). Self-doubt or feeling not worthy of success may also originate from childhood.

Whatever the reasons, there are several common symptoms shared by many of those suffering from the fear of success. You might have the fear of success if you ever noticed yourself do the following: 1) starting new projects without completing any of them, or struggling to finish at least one; 2) working on each of the projects occupies a lot of your time, but you never concentrate on any of them enough; 3) being rarely satisfied with your work, always managing to find what to criticize yourself for, or depreciating yourself in other ways; 4) talking about your plans or things you want to do instead of doing them (Lifehack.org). Along with these, there are several other factors that might also point at you suffering from the fear of success: being hesitant or reluctant about sharing your work with others; sabotaging your own progress (procrastinating, wasting your energy on doing numerous insignificant tasks instead of focusing on what is important to you); second-guessing yourself, being doubtful about your “worthiness” of success, and so on.

The fear of success is a cunning and stealthy enemy. People nowadays are aware of the fear of failure—but many underestimate its “twin.” Originating from childhood traumas, the fear of standing out, novelty, and being a subject of public attention, the fear of success manifests itself in a number of ways. Reminding yourself that you are worthy of success, or counselling a psychologist, might be an effective step to eliminate this fear.

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