

INDEPENDENCE IN MODERATION

By Maya Serbu

As a society, our biggest fear is being alone. It is always the worst case scenario in any hypothetical situation. Fear of dying alone, living alone and just ending up alone in any sense. When did we become so afraid of ourselves? When did we decide that we cannot bear the thought of our own company? Who decided that we must depend on others to appreciate our presence, when we as individuals are unable to do so for ourselves?

Now, I'm getting ahead of myself; for there are plenty of people who do value their independence and solitude. However, enjoying independence does not always cancel out the dull, twinge of loneliness that the late hours of the night can bring. It does not always dismiss the sheer, heart-palpitating feeling of heat rising in your cheeks -- stinging when the teacher calls on you to speak. And the feeling of vulnerability in your eyes, which dart frantically as you're standing in a room filled with strangers waiting for your friends to arrive, that feeling does not always vanish. Some people get these feelings more often than others but regardless of how frequently, everyone gets lonely. But why are there so many negative perceptions associated with being alone?

As a teenager in high school I can tell you firsthand, how people perceive you socially is what determines your spot on the food chain. There is this constant nagging, an overwhelming longing in the back of your head to fit in, to seem cool, and to be liked by a bunch of strangers that don't even like themselves. Teenagers will search anywhere for validation, the one place they will never look? In the mirror. The reflection of the only person that will always be with you, yet we never check in on it. We are so desperate to feel accepted by others that we will do anything to avoid being left alone with our own head full of thoughts.

I'm not saying to isolate yourself for days and never leave your room, because in some cases being alone can be harmful, in some cases people need to be around others. Like chocolate, independence is good in moderation, too much and you'll start feeling bad. If you identify as an introvert that doesn't mean you need to break out of your comfort zone completely, if you identify as an extrovert you do not have to close yourself off from the world altogether. We are all very different

people with very different lives, however, those little in-between moments that we all have in common shouldn't be something that we as a society should dread.

So when you shut the bathroom door and stand at the sink tomorrow morning to brush your teeth, enjoy it -- for those 2 minutes may be the only time you'll get to yourself. When you're sitting on the edge of your bed to put on socks before running out the door, or the moments of sitting in your car in your driveway just pausing for a moment before carrying on your hectic morning ... try to savour those in-between moments; value them, if these are the only times you are alone -- make them something you look forward to. Use those in-between moments to start making yourself someone YOU enjoy being around.

And then let me ask you, are we ever truly alone if we have ourselves?