

I Don't Just Want My Alone Time; I Need It



SOLITUDE IS THE CORNERSTONE—THE *cornerstone*—of my mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health. I need solitude in my life like I need food and water and shelter in my life. It's not optional; it's required.

And I know it.

So I will go to great lengths to have the place to myself. In my world, “give me some space” is a directive to be taken literally as well as figuratively. I need a physical place to call my own—an office with a door, a cozy den, an under-the-radar walking trail or coffee shop—as well as physical distance away from other people, where I won't feel smothered. I need emotional air.

If, by sheer happenstance, some alone time falls out of the sky and into my lap, I do a little happy dance ... for real. But usually I'm not that lucky. Usually I need to be actively strategic about getting my alone time. It takes careful planning and, often, a bit of creativity mixed with a pinch of sacrifice.

If I'm going out of town for a professional meeting, for instance, I'll gladly pay twice as much for my own hotel room rather than share a room—especially if I'm dealing with a known extravert! At college, I'll go to the library on Friday or Saturday evening precisely *because* most everyone else is out partying—not *in spite* of it. At home I'll stay up 'til 3 a.m.—or

wake up at 3 a.m.—if, in return, I’m rewarded with even just 30 minutes of blissful solitude. If I have to choose between alone time and sleep, I’ll take the alone time, thank you very much. I can sleep when I’m dead.

I plan for my alone time. I plot for my alone time. I finagle and juggle for my alone time, the same way extraverts look for activity and social interaction. I all but put alone time on my calendar—because if it’s not a part of my life, well, then I don’t have much of a life.

And I’m not alone.