

3 Tips from Aristotle on Fighting Loneliness

Valentine's Day is fast approaching, and for many the day is a taunting reminder of what they feel is their unlovable, lonely state.

According to one source, continual loneliness afflicts [one-fifth of Americans](#). Such a statistic is quite saddening, but is it possible for individuals to pull themselves out loneliness?

Aristotle might answer that question with a "yes." In his famous work, the [Nicomachean Ethics](#), Aristotle explores the components of friendship, love, and companionship. One section, entitled "Of loving and being loved," provides several ways in which we can fight loneliness and make ourselves more loveable:

1. Avoid flattery

Flattery, although sought by many as an assurance of love, is a temporary comfort and will only lead to disappointment, unsatisfying friendships, and potential future loneliness.

"Most people seem, from a desire for honour, to wish to be loved rather than to love, and on this account most men are fond of flatterers; for a flatterer is an inferior friend, or pretends to be so and to love more than he is loved: but being loved is thought to come near to being honoured, and that most men strive for."

2. Love others

The old adage, "To have a friend, you need to be one," is often passed off as a cliché, but in Aristotle's eyes, nothing could be closer to the truth. Satisfying friendship and love,

Aristotle implies, comes in pouring oneself out for the benefit of others, without expecting anything in return. Those who do so are the truly loveable.

“Friendship, however, seems to lie in the loving, rather than in the being loved. This is shown by the delight that mothers take in loving; for some give their children to others to rear, and love them since they know them, but do not look for love in return, if it be impossible to have both, being content to see their children doing well, and loving them, though they receive from them, in their ignorance, nothing of what is due to a mother.”

3. Do right and encourage others to avoid wrong

According to Aristotle, men of little character are prone to having friends go in and out of their lives with ease. Men of virtue, on the other hand, build solid, long-lasting friendships because they strive to do what is right and encourage their friends to do the same.

“[F]or it is characteristic of a good man neither to go wrong himself, nor to let his friend go wrong.

Bad men on the other hand [as friends] have no stability: for they do not even continue like themselves; but for a short space they become friends, rejoicing in each other's wickedness.”