

Researchers Say Free Time Can Increase Loneliness

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. idealize /aɪˈdiə.laɪz/ (verb) to think of or represent someone or something as better than that person or thing really is
Example: Why do people idealize their school days?
2. leisure /ˈleɪ.ər/ (noun) the time when you are free from work or other duties and can relax
Example: Most people only have a limited amount of leisure time.
3. drag /dræg/ (verb) to move something by pulling it along a surface, usually the ground:
Example: Pick the chair up instead of dragging it behind you!
4. meaningful /ˈmiː.nɪŋ.fəl/ (adjective) useful, serious, or important
Example: She seems to find it difficult to form meaningful relationships.
5. momentary /ˈməʊ.mən.tər.i/ (adjective) lasting for a very short time:
Example: It was a momentary weakness on her part.



Free time is sometimes **idealized**, but research shows free time can sometimes be unhealthy by increasing loneliness. A new Pennsylvania State study showed that engaging in meaningful, challenging activities during free time can reduce people's loneliness and increase their positive feelings.

An international team of researchers including John Dattilo—professor of recreation, park, and tourism management at Penn State—has been studying how to increase **leisure** and

reduce loneliness during the pandemic among both international college students and older adults.

Across two different studies, the researchers found that people who had meaningful, challenging experiences were less lonely—even when higher levels of social contact and support were not available.

“There is a well-known saying: ‘Time flies when you are having fun,’” said Dattilo. “The unspoken opposite idea of it is that time **drags** when you are bored. Our research shows that both of these ideas are true. By engaging in **meaningful** activities during free time that demand focus, people can reduce loneliness and increase **momentary** happiness.”

DISCUSSION

1. Do you have a lot of free time? How do you spend it?
2. What is the best thing to do during free time?
3. When was the last time you were bored? What did you do?
4. How do you beat loneliness?
5. Why is loneliness bad?
6. What do you do when you see someone is lonely?