

Three Windows Three Women

Loneliness in Community



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Memories of this past May return to me when I think about having loneliness in community. I was moving into an already established intentional community of seven other people. With so many people in the house, it seemed I shouldn't have found myself lonely; yet these feelings were very present my first month living there. This community had been together for awhile. They all knew one another, enjoyed one another, and laughed with one another. The group unity was already formed, and I felt like an outsider.

Because I could sense that I was not part of their group unity, it felt lonely to be with them. Though it seemed like it shouldn't be the case, I was in fact lonely in community. I found myself retreating to my room often. It was not less lonely there, but it just seemed to make more sense to feel lonely when I was actually alone. I felt like there was something really wrong with me if I was feeling loneliness while surrounded by people.

A musical friend once explained that we all have our own bongo drums, and we are all drumming at our own beats. Each time we join a new community we can sense that all these beats have joined together to form a groove. When a community has formed a groove, it can be very intimidating to throw your own beat into the mix. The groove already sounds great; you are afraid you might mess it up.

However, you still need to take the risk and start drumming your beat loudly and confidently. It is awkward at first. No one knows what to do with your beat. It doesn't quite fit with the groove. But as you keep drumming your beat, everyone's beat begins to change slightly. And soon enough, the beats have unified into a groove again. It's true; the old groove is lost and may never be found again. But with your contribution, you have helped to form a new and novel groove that would have never existed without your presence, and without your beat. 🗨