

## **The Perfect Fairytale**

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If you had to pick between being the one in the movie that gets a happily ever after ending or starring in the one about living a single life, you'd probably pick the first one. We watch rom com movies that paint a beautiful picture of couples that live a fairytale life and always live happily ever after, and then it's conveniently always the single ones in those same rom coms that are living their worst lives. They are the mentally unstable, always wishing they had a partner, crying on the couch eating ice cream because they are alone, they are broke and just trying to get by, and portrayed to always mess up every relationship that comes their way. We often say that those fairytale relationships we see in movies don't exist in real life but fail to point out that the always sad, pathetic, and loner single person doesn't exist in real life. There may be a season in every single person's life that has felt like they are the star in a horrible rom com but that doesn't paint the full picture of someone who is single. The truth is single people enjoy being alone, become successful on their own, and have plenty of stable and healthy relationships in their life with friends and family. The reality of being single and alone never lives up to how people make it out to be.

There is an idea around being single that you're likely to have poor emotional health and when you are in a relationship that is when you are at your happiest. Although being single doesn't mean one won't suffer from anxiety or depression, it doesn't increase our chances like having a romantic partner does. In a study of the psychological well-being among older adults by Matthew Wright and Susan Brown, it was found that for women whether in a relationship or single there was no difference in depression, anxiety, or loneliness. Instead, women who are dating had more stress than the single women. For men there was also no significant difference

of depression, stress, or loneliness between singles and dating. They found men who were married were more likely to have depression symptoms and whether a man was in a relationship or not the loneliness was still present (DePaulo, B, 2016). Even with being in a romantic relationship and having the presence of a significant other, being in a relationship doesn't lower any stress or depression. Not every person in a relationship lives a happier and healthier life than someone who is single. In the article, "Yes, single people can be happy and healthy" from *Time Magazine*, Angela Haupt (2023) brings to light that although some married couples are happy that doesn't mean marriage makes you happy and less lonely. Some people in relationships may be miserable and lonely while someone who's single is happy and fulfilled. Although not all single people live alone, they tend to be more sociable and active than the couples that turn inwards to each other while living together. In her article Haupt (2023) writes what social scientists have found in studies on the levels of loneliness singles and couples experience, "They aren't just staying home, the way people who live with others often do," DePaulo says. "They walk out the door and meet other people." One study found that people who lived with others-not those who lived alone-actually had the highest levels of loneliness." Single people have more time to build relationships with friends and family and help in the community. Spending time socializing and getting involved helps lower the levels of loneliness people may experience and overall improves their emotional health. The time and energy couples devote to each other, single people can pour into more relationships in their lives making it easier to build new friendships and maintain healthy ones. The feeling and act of being happy and joyful doesn't need to be found in romantic relationships, it can be found being single and from within.

When it comes to different forms of relationships, people will say having a romantic partner is the best form of relationship to have. Even though romantic relationships can add

many positive factors to someone's life, friendships and relationships outside of romantic ones can be just as beneficial if not more. In his article, 'Want to be healthier? Hang out with your friends', Teddy Amenabar (2023) writes, "But platonic love trumps romantic love in a number of ways. People with strong friendships tend to have better mental health and studies suggest they're in better physical health, as well. Researchers have found large social networks lower our risk of premature death more than exercise or dieting alone." Friendships are a long-lasting form of connection that can help lead us to live a longer life filled with better physical and mental health. The argument against platonic friendships is that romantic relationships have an equal effect on people because of how close they are to each other, many people in relationships will say, "Well we just get each other". Science Made Fun touched on this in their article, 'The Shocking Truth About Being Single', "Although married people have built-in care, they become "insular" and bonded mostly to each other. Single people, however, tend to have more friends, spend more time building their social networks, and contributing to their communities" (Science Made Fun 2022). Many people in relationships lose their outside connections that fade away over time and many lose their friends because their sole focus is on each other. Although romantic relationships can introduce you to new friends that your partner has, people tend to lose their close friends because they put all their time into the relationship. In the article, 'The price of love? Losing two of your closest friends', written by Ian Sample, he touches on what research has said about the correlation between romantic relationships and losing close friends. "Falling in love comes at the cost of losing close friends, because romantic partners absorb time that would otherwise be invested in platonic relationships, researchers say. A new partner pushes out two close friends on average, leaving lovers with a smaller inner circle of people they can turn to in times of crisis, a study found." (Sample 2010). Sample (2010) explains more of the study and

how our close network of friends usually consists of 5, but being in a relationship people tend to lose two, and one of their friends is new meaning they aren't as close. Having close platonic friendships is important and they tend to be more stable compared to romantic relationships that can come and go. Which according to Amenabar (2023), these platonic friendships we have are beneficial to our mental health and have a positive impact on our physical health, so the people in romantic relationships that don't spend more time with friends, building social networks, and contributing to their communities also lose all the positive benefits that come with it.

What many people believe is that being alone means you're lonely. Although someone may be physically alone from a romantic partner, that doesn't always correlate with the feeling of loneliness. Having a romantic partner isn't the only thing that will fulfill loneliness. According to Angela Haupt in her article, 'Yes, Single People Can Be Happy', the research done by Elyakim Kislev says that people who are in relationships often turn away from family and friends' inwards to their partners, over time this leads to losing friends and they find themselves lonely later in life. Single people are often able to socialize more with friends and build long lasting friendships, which positively contributes to one's mental health. Personally, I know how being single can seem lonely looking at it while being in a relationship. After having a romantic partner for a long period or even a short period of time, you can't imagine being alone or without them. It's easy to get attached to the person you're dating, and they become the cliche saying of being your missing piece. Now that I'm single, looking at the concept of being alone is more appealing than being in a relationship. I'm able to build more friendships that do fulfill the physical part of being alone like a relationship would but I'm also able to invest so much time into my personal growth that now I don't feel the need to seek out the missing piece. Although there are similarities between the two, many people are unaware of the difference between being

alone and being lonely. In her article, ‘The Beginner’s Guide to Being Happy Alone’, Ann Pietrangelo (2023) explains the difference between these two concepts. Pietrangelo (2023) points out that some people like to have solitude and are content with spending time alone, this means that the person is being alone, not being lonely. She then goes on to explain how loneliness can look, “On the other hand, maybe you’re surrounded by family and friends but not really relating beyond a surface level, which has you feeling rather empty and disconnected. Or maybe being alone just leaves you sad and longing for company. That’s loneliness.” (Pietrangelo, 2023).

Similarly to how single people can be physically alone but not lonely, people in relationships can be with their partner but still feel lonely. The more time I spent being alone, building platonic friendships and working on self-growth, I grew to love being alone and felt so fulfilled on my own that there was no feeling of loneliness. There is happiness and fulfillment outside of a partner and a relationship, that is found from within and from platonic friendships.

Something many people get wrong is that when you are single, you’re not as financially stable compared to those in relationships. Although the cost of living may be expensive for singles, they aren’t obligated to spend their money on another person and have more time and energy to put into their jobs that one in a relationship would put towards their partner. In Lindsay Dodgson’s article, ‘7 Science-backed reasons why you may be better off single’, she mentions that being single you aren’t tied down with responsibility on spending money on anyone else, except yourself. Having a romantic relationship is associated with more spending, whether that’s on food, activities, birthday or holiday spending, or having children together. Singles who don’t have to devote time and energy to a partner, devote their time to their career and future dreams and goals for themselves, increasing their income and savings. The time gained by not having a

relationship is time gained for a single person's self and life growth. When they can devote their time to their future career, it sets them up for more success.

A big misconception about single people is that they are only single because they aren't good at keeping or maintaining relationships. Having a romantic relationship doesn't automatically show that someone is good at keeping one, there are people who choose to be single. According to Lindsay Dodgson (2023), "Being single does not mean you are bad at relationships. In fact, research shows people are staying single for longer and settling down older, and some are choosing to be that way forever." There are people who choose to be single and prefer being single because they are content with the friendships and what they already have, not needing or wanting to seek out more. Being single is a choice that some continue to make for themselves and like Dodgson (2023) mentioned, some are choosing to be single forever. Just because someone is dating doesn't mean they are good at maintaining a relationship because there are plenty of romantic relationships that are unhealthy.

Overall, being single can bring many positive aspects to one's life. Single people can continue to find happiness from within and from platonic friendships which are so beneficial, find enjoyment in being alone, focus on their future goals and successes, and maintain many stable and healthy platonic relationships. As someone who is in their early twenties and single, a lot of the time people have pity for me and tell me I'll find someone one day. But I don't want to think about finding someone because I am content with being alone and single. For singles reading this, take this season of singleness to discover yourself and your passion, goals, hobbies, and what makes you, you. Not every perfect fairytale needs to consist of a romantic relationship to have a good beginning, middle, or end. And they lived happily ever after and alone... THE END.

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