

A portrait of Dr. Barbara Collins, a Black woman with short dark hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a dark blue blazer over a light-colored collared shirt. She holds a pair of glasses in her right hand, which is raised towards her face. She is also wearing large hoop earrings, a ring on her right hand, and a small cross necklace. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

HEALTH AND
WELL-BEING

LONELINESS IN YOUR SECOND HALF OF LIFE

Dr Barbara Collins

Frankly, I was shocked...

More than one-third of adults aged 45 and older feel lonely, according to a new report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM).

Older adults are at increased risk of loneliness and social isolation because they are more likely to face factors such as living alone, the loss of family or friends, chronic illness, and hearing loss.

Loneliness is the feeling of being alone, regardless of social contact. There is strong evidence that many adults aged 50 and older are socially isolated or lonely in ways that put their health at risk.

After a difficult divorce, I was really sad and quite depressed. I was in my late forties and feeling lonely trying to make the pain go away. I was trying to soothe my pain looking outside of myself. Hanging out with friends, going to dinner parties, and traveling didn't help because I was still unhappy.

Watching couples holding hands while walking along the streets made me feel wistful 'if only I had a companion.'

One night I was attending my daughter's acting graduation when I experienced a startling AHA moment. Someone got on stage and began to recite a poem called "Who Am I?" There was one line in particular that hit me, when she said, you alone are responsible for your happiness."Happiness is not outside of you. It's the good moments you create for yourself."

Wow! Tears welled up because the poem triggered my pain of feeling lonely. I realized I couldn't wait for someone to make me happy. I wanted a companion to help me navigate my life.

Here's the thing, when we look outside of ourselves to connect with someone to feel whole, happy, or content we give up our power. And when we give up our power it can create anxiety and a feeling of being out of control.

One of the ways you can regain control is to get back in touch with your likes, your interests, and your gifts. Here are a few tips:

• *Knowing who you are empowers you to create powerful choices about how to live your life in the future*

• *When you're in this state, you're confident that you are attracting the right person to come into your life.*

Here's one of the things I did to regain control of my life. I invited my close high school buddies to meet me for dinner. Then I asked them to share when they saw me at my happiest in high school.

They instantly responded, "You loved to perform on stage." "Really?" I said because I had forgotten that I loved acting.

So I enrolled in an acting class after work and amazingly felt the joy of acting again. The hours in the class flew by. I wasn't even tired after a long workday.

I chose to include performing as part of the things to do in my second half of life. Acting not only distracted me from my loneliness but allowed me to meet new people with similar interests.

This is one of the things I do in my program, I help you rewind to remember your likes, your interests, and your gifts. It's like you're going on an archaeological adventure of self-discovery.

I created a simple 5-step program that gives you a purpose and direction for living with confidence in your second half of life.

My plan worked for me. Now I want to share my success on how to live life on your terms with power and intention because when you get back in touch with some of the things you've left behind, you're able to experience a meaningful life regardless of whether you're in a romantic relationship or not.

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