

## LONELINESS, MARRIAGE AND LOSS

**Ami Rokach, Ph.D.**

York University, Canada

Center for Academic Studies, Israel

*Scholars from various disciplines have studied close relationships for decades. However, theoretical and empirical work on loneliness in close relationships such as marriage, is relatively recent and scarce. Although marriage is supposed to protect partners from loneliness, the loss or absence of marital pair-bonding, the essence of close attachment and felt security, is likely to cause relational loneliness. Loneliness caused by, and coupled with a distressed and dissatisfying marital relationship is particularly depressing and agonizing because it is completely disharmonious with the joyous bliss expected from a rewarding and enhancing marriage. Apparently there are many couples who are locked into distressed and loneliness-evoking marriages who are unable to break away due to barriers to divorce. This situation is likely to compound and perpetuate emotional loneliness.*

*Given the potential impact of loneliness on partners in close relationships, it is quite reasonable that greater attention will be paid to better understanding of the antecedents, and outcomes associated with relational loneliness. The main purpose of this poster is to discuss loneliness as an experience having cognitive, emotional, and behavioral manifestations, and as a reaction to the disruption of an attachment pair-bonding which is central to close relationships. More specifically, loneliness is addressed in the context of loss or absence of a supportive attachment bond due to enduring marital distress, divorce, or widowhood. I also highlight some maladaptive cognitions and interactive behaviors that exacerbate loneliness, creating a loop that lonely people may find difficult to break away from. Finally, we discuss some assessment and therapeutic implications for couple therapists addressing relational loneliness.*