

We all experience loneliness. And we all have a built in desire to feel like we belong. But when we realize that loneliness and belonging can co-exist - what do we do with that?

## THIS IS SUCKER PUNCHED

I have spent years on a quest to find the perfect pots and pans. Stainless steel is great, but not convenient. Non-stick is so easy, but not the best cooking experience. Cast iron is a beloved classic for a reason but sometimes I just need something light that will wipe clean easily. And then I found Our Place. If all the other cookware had babies, the Always Pan and Perfect Pot would be their perfect little progeny. I have the spice color and I kid you not, I'm in love. They look great sitting on my stove top when I procrastinate doing the dishes and they have reignited my love for cooking. They come with super useful accessories: I love the bamboo steamer basket for the pan and the fact that the pot doubles as a dutch oven (it's oven safe - how cool is that?!). Visit [BeckyLMcCoy.com/OurPlace](http://BeckyLMcCoy.com/OurPlace) to stock up on the perfect holiday gifts and get yourself a little something.

When I was first diagnosed with anxiety and depression I was in my mid-20s and I didn't know anyone else who experienced mental health issues. I felt misunderstood and incredibly alone. A year or so later a friend had a few panic attacks and - while I hated that she was going through this - having someone who knew what I was experiencing was a huge comfort.

One of the greatest lies of loneliness is that we are the only ones who have ever been lonely. Everyone gets lonely.

Whenever I think of loneliness I think of Charlotte Donlon. Charlotte is a writer and spiritual director who has change the way I think about what it means to be lonely and what it means to belong. In her book *The Great Belonging*, Charlotte lists a handful of times in life when we feel lonely - even when we don't realize that loneliness is what we're feeling.

- You wake up in a strange place.
- You wake up in a familiar place with a beloved one lying next to you.
- You long for your childhood home.
- You long for your grandmother's home.

- You long for somewhere you've never been.
- You're sick on your birthday.
- No one remembers your birthday.
- You're a new employee in a new office and you plan to eat lunch alone.
- You're on the outside of the inside jokes.
- You have a secret that you will never tell.
- Your older sister leaves for college.
- Your oldest leaves for college.
- Your best friend's wedding.
- You visit a new church for the first time.
- You visit a new church for the second time. And the third.
- Hospital smells.
- Hospital sounds.
- The anniversary of your mother's death, your husband's death.
- You remember that you forgot the anniversary of your mother's death.
- You turn out the lights before going to sleep, when all you have left are yourself and your thoughts.

It's almost as if we can't escape loneliness. Which would be incredibly depressing if we didn't also get to experience belonging. Charlotte taught me to consider spirituality the ways we belong to ourselves, to each other, to God, and to the world.

When we experience loneliness in one area, we have an opportunity to sink into and be held by the belonging we experience in others.

How do I experiencing belonging within myself?  
 How do I experiencing belonging with the divine?  
 How do I experiencing belonging with the people around me?  
 The world around me?

Belonging, like loneliness changes throughout our lives.

And the most powerful thing is to realize we aren't the only ones those shifts.

When we belong, we know we aren't alone. Maybe no one I know has lost their husband, but they do understand what it feels like to see your dreams shatter and know your life will never be the same. Maybe the people around you can't empathize with your situation or even the emotions you're experiencing

because of it, but can be by your side and support you through it. What is community if not a group of lonely people choosing to love each other?

Community helps us feel seen, understood, and supported. Sometimes the feeling of belonging comes from knowing that no one needs to understand, but they support and love you anyways.

Here are three books to help you think more about loneliness and belonging:

- [The Great Belonging](#) by Charlotte Donlon
- [The Art of Belonging](#) by Charles Vogl
- [All the Lonely People](#) by Mike Gayle.

You'll find links to these along with a full transcript of this episode at [BeckyLMcCoy.com/podcast/77](http://BeckyLMcCoy.com/podcast/77)

Solve all your cookware problems with Our Place's Always Pan and Perfect Pot. Dress up your kitchen with one (or all) of the great colors to choose from! Did I mention the accessories?! Pot holders, steamer baskets, and the most gorgeous trivets. They've always got great sales going on, no coupon necessary. Shop at [BeckyLMcCoy.com/OurPlace](http://BeckyLMcCoy.com/OurPlace)

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Share this episode with a friend and let me know what you think! You can find me on my website at [BeckyLMcCoy.com](http://BeckyLMcCoy.com) or on Twitter and Instagram @BeckyLMcCoy. Get my 4 Mantras For When I'm Overwhelmed at [BeckyLMcCoy.com/4Mantras](http://BeckyLMcCoy.com/4Mantras) and as a bonus you'll get sneak peeks into future projects as well as early access to future events and retreats! If you found this episode encouraging or helpful, share it with a friend and remember: loneliness gives us an opportunity to look for belonging in new ways. You're doing great.