



## ANTHROPOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

### Podcast Transcript

#### A Life in Three Scenes

MICHAEL STASIK: To capture the multifaceted and shifting nature of loneliness as experienced over a lifetime, let's imagine one life unfolding in three scenes.

Scene one:

FEMALE VOICE: As a girl, I lived on the outskirts of a quiet village. My home was surrounded by open meadows where cows sometimes grazed, and I could always smell the fresh grass in the air.

One day, everything changed. We moved to the city because my mother got a new job. I had to leave everything behind: my friends, my sports club, the comfort of the countryside.

Both the city and my new school felt foreign. I didn't feel like I belonged. I struggled to make friends, though I longed for companionship. The weight of that longing pressed down on me. Sometimes, when I thought of the meadows back home, I couldn't hold back the tears. Moving to the city left me feeling abandoned and untethered.

MICHAEL STASIK: Scene two

FEMALE VOICE: Well, eventually I graduated from school, where I'd finally managed to make a few friends. My life moved forward: I went to university, found a job, fell in love, got married and became a mother. I thought I was happy.

But motherhood was nothing like I expected. Caring for my baby demanded so much of my time and energy. It left me sleep-deprived and emotionally drained. My partner and I – we lost the connection and intimacy we'd once had. My work became more isolated; I was working part-time from home, and slowly I drifted away from my colleagues. My friends felt distant too, and I barely had time for my hobbies.

I should have been grateful. I should have felt fulfilled by motherhood. But instead, I grappled with an unspoken sense of dissatisfaction. I missed the life that I'd given up, the version of me that I had to set aside to make room for everything else.



MICHAEL STASIK: Scene three

FEMALE VOICE: My child grew up and eventually left our home to start his own life in a different part of the country. In the meantime, I'd managed to reconnect with old friends and breathe new life into my marriage.

Then, as I was nearing retirement, everything changed. My partner suddenly passed away, and the grief hit me like a tidal wave. I felt abandoned and more vulnerable than ever before. The emotional pain of losing him was overwhelming. There were days when I suffered a physical agony that felt almost unbearable.

MICHAEL STASIK: The girl – who grew into a woman, became a mother and eventually a widow – felt loneliness in many different ways throughout her life, each time with its own intensity and shape. Her loneliness came from different places over the years: the nostalgic longing for the friends, meadows and cows of her childhood; the loss of independence, intimacy and productivity that came with motherhood; and the absence of relationships built on close connection, mutual need and understanding. Sometimes, her loneliness showed up in brief, fleeting moments. Other times, it felt like a never-ending emptiness, a deep pain that seemed impossible to shake.

Loneliness, as we see in this imagined life, isn't just one thing. It's complex and takes on many forms depending on the situation. So, how can we begin to understand the many ways that loneliness shows up in different lives? What do you think? Write down any ideas that you have on this topic.