




The image is a promotional graphic for 'xplore' at CMU. It features a background image of a large, multi-story brick building with a crenelated roofline, partially obscured by trees. The word 'xplore' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font, with the 'x' in a light blue color. Below it, the words 'KEEP THINKING' are written in a smaller, white, all-caps, sans-serif font. At the bottom, there is a dark blue horizontal bar. On the left side of this bar, the text 'XPLORE AT CMU' is written in white, all-caps, sans-serif font. On the right side of the bar, the text 'Talking about what no one talks about: Loneliness' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

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# xplore

KEEP THINKING

WEEK 3

Pro symptom position

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WHY DON'T YOU *JUST*...



CALL A FRIEND?




INVITE SOMEONE OVER?



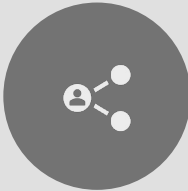
JOIN A BIBLE STUDY?

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THERE ARE NO *JUSTS* IN LONELINESS



CALL A FRIEND?



INVITE SOMEONE OVER?



JOIN A BIBLE STUDY?

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LEAVING LONELINESS BEHIND IS HARD

# The Undermining Resistance



Transform your sneaky inner guard dog into an effective guide dog!

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<p><b>IS THERE ANYTHING I CONTRIBUTE</b></p>	<p>to my loneliness?</p> <p><b>GUARD DOG TO GUIDE DOG:</b></p> <p>finding a way to ensure you aren't getting in your own way when you are lonely.</p>
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NO ONE  
SETS OUT  
TO BE  
LONELY

maybe to seek solitude, but not loneliness

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NO ONE  
SETS OUT  
TO BE  
LONELY

Loneliness is the mismatch between the quantity and quality of relationships we have, and those that we want.

Perlman and Peplau

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**1/3 OF PEOPLE ARE LONELY**

- You are not a loser.
- You're not making yourself lonely on purpose
- But if there is something that holds you back from engagement with others, wouldn't you want to know?

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**HELEN**

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# WHAT IS A PRO SYMPTOM POSITION?

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ALL BEHAVIOR IS A  
FORM OF  
COMMUNICATION



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ALL BEHAVIOR IS A FORM OF COMMUNICATION

What is your behavior saying about how you are feeling?



The collage consists of four square images arranged in a 2x2 grid. Top-left: A laptop with the Netflix logo on the screen, next to a plate of snacks. Top-right: A glass bowl filled with various types of chips. Bottom-left: A woman with short red hair, wearing a red shirt, shouting with her right fist raised against a background of flames. Bottom-right: A close-up of a wine glass containing red wine, with a single drop of wine falling into it.

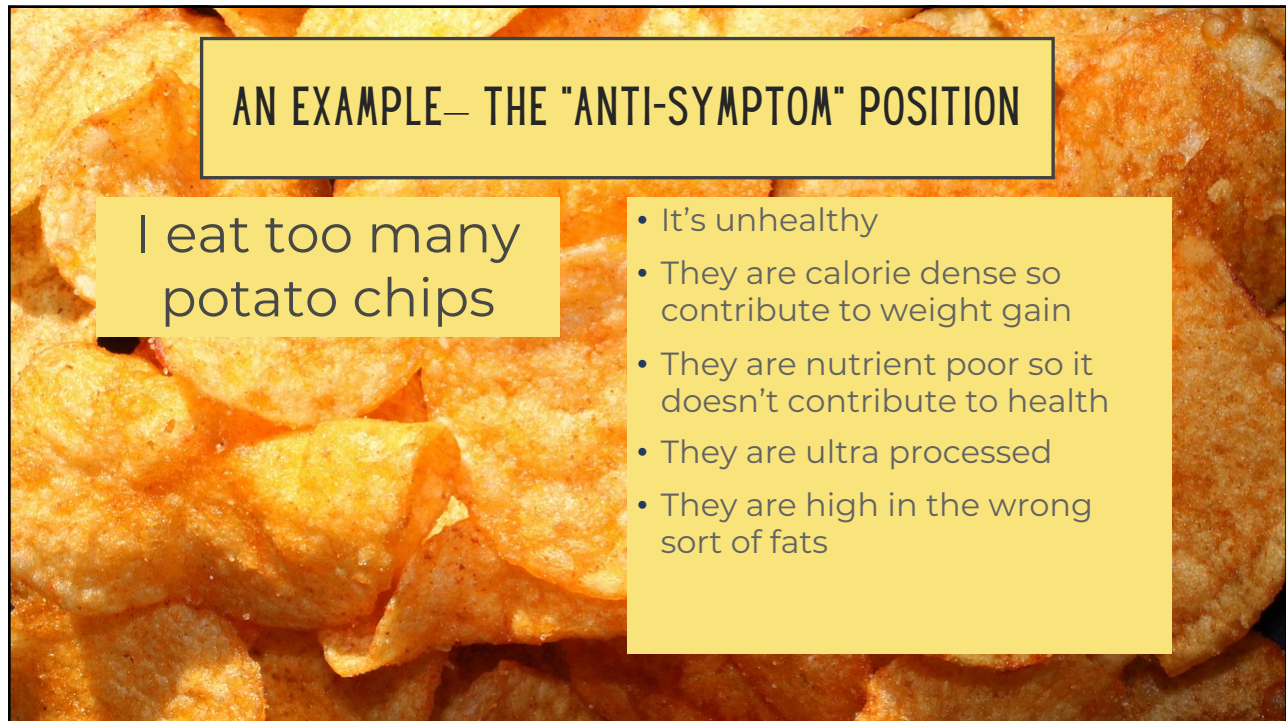
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WHEN WE DON'T LIKE SOMETHING ABOUT OURSELVES, WE CAN THINK OF MANY REASONS WHY WE WANT TO CHANGE

This is the “**anti-symptom**” position

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**AN EXAMPLE— THE "ANTI-SYMPATOM" POSITION**

I eat too many potato chips

- It's unhealthy
- They are calorie dense so it contribute to weight gain
- They are nutrient poor so it doesn't contribute to health
- They are ultra processed
- They are high in the wrong sort of fats

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**AN EXAMPLE— THE "PRO-SYMPATOM" POSITION**

I eat too many potato chips

- They are tasty and crunchy—and oral. My body feels better. My stress drops.
- They are right there in the cupboard—no effort
- They don't judge me or ridicule me. They don't make demands.
- They go great with a show
- I am calmer

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IT'S EASY TO UNDERSTAND WHY YOU "SHOULDN'T BE LONELY."

IT'S HARDER TO RESPECT THE "PRO SYMPTOM" POSITION OF LONELINESS.

UNDERSTAND THAT THERE **IS** A REASON TO BE LONELY, AND IT IS A WORTHWHILE REASON.

IT WILL CHANGE YOUR WORLD

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THERE IS A MORE IMPORTANT REASON FOR THE ISOLATING OR WITHDRAWAL OR NON-INITIATING BEHAVIOR TO HAPPEN THAN FOR IT NOT TO HAPPEN.

**ALWAYS.**

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THE GAURD DOG

YOU



DANGER

LONELINESS

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## WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF DANGER?



DANGER

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## AN INEXHAUSTIVE LIST OF PROSYMPTOM POSITIONS

- **Rejection: Fear of rejection**

- you've had early painful experiences
- it's not sufficiently masculine to want relationships of intimacy

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## AN INEXHAUSTIVE LIST OF PROSYMPTOM POSITIONS

1. Rejection: Fear of rejection
  1. you had early painful experiences
  - it's not sufficiently mature to form relationship or intimacy

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## AN INEXHAUSTIVE LIST OF PROSYMPTOM POSITIONS

- **Abandonment:**
  - you anticipate abandonment
  - you prejudge the likelihood of failure

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## AN INEXHAUSTIVE LIST OF PROSYMPTOM POSITIONS

### 1. Abandonment:

1. you anticipate abandonment
2. you prejudge the likelihood of failure



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## AN INEXHAUSTIVE LIST OF PROSYMPTOM POSITIONS

### **Anxiety-Concern of uncertainty**

- You anticipate people won't like you
- Need for 100% success—perfection!
- You want to protect yourself from something hurtful being repeated
- You worry you will attract someone who will trap you

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## AN INEXHAUSTIVE LIST OF PROSYMPTOM POSITIONS

### Grief

- difficulty accepting reality
- honouring the one lost

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## AN INEXHAUSTIVE LIST OF PROSYMPTOM POSITIONS

### Shame: “not enough”

- you worry people will find out your secret (addiction-“don’t talk, don’t think, don’t feel”)
- you worry people will find out your secret (e.g. Trauma)
- you know you aren’t successful/pretty/rich/funny enough to have others like you
- you want to wait until you are more successful/likable

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## AN INEXHAUSTIVE LIST OF PROSYMPTOM POSITIONS

### **Capacity**

- You don't have it in you to face potential disappointment
- you are too tired to engage
- you don't have capacity for "one more thing"

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## AN INEXHAUSTIVE LIST OF PROSYMPTOM POSITIONS

### **Boundaries**

- you don't know how to set limits and people can hurt you and never know it
- you over function for people and get yourself into trouble
- others have violated your boundaries before and so you're confused/fuzzy about appropriate boundaries

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THE GAURD DOG

YOU




DANGER

LONELINESS

The image features a central photograph of a light-colored dog, possibly a pit bull mix, looking through a chain-link fence. The dog's face is partially obscured by the metal mesh. The background is a plain, light gray color. The text 'THE GAURD DOG' is centered at the top in a white box. The words 'YOU', 'DANGER', and 'LONELINESS' are positioned around the dog image.

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WHEN YOU KNOW BETTER...

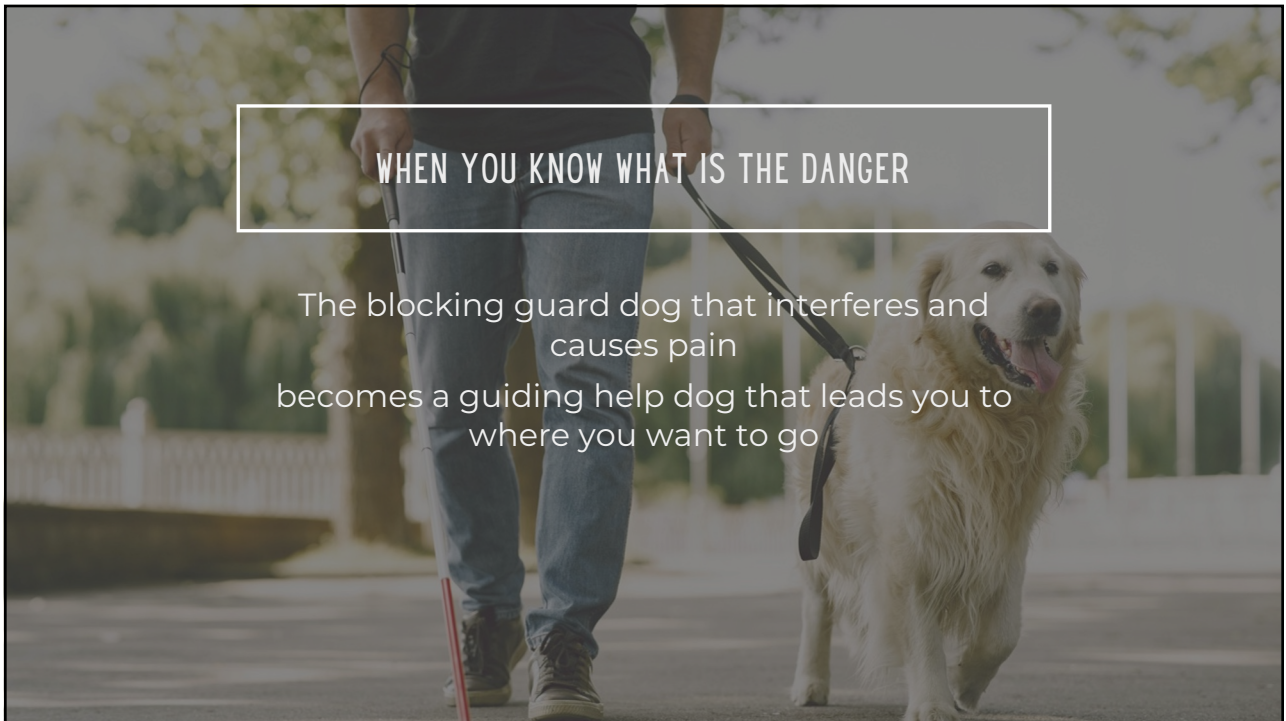


The image is split into two sections. On the left is a dark blue vertical bar containing a white box with the text 'WHEN YOU KNOW BETTER...'. On the right is a photograph of a set of keys lying on a light-colored, textured carpet. The keys include a car key with a black fob, several house keys, a blue padlock, and a red padlock. A small white tag is attached to the keys.

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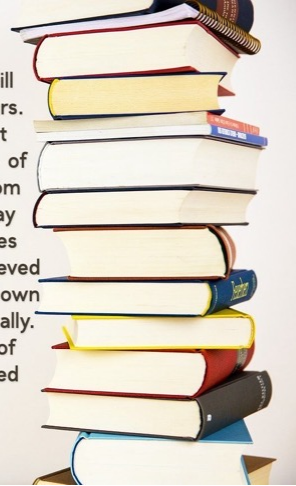


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My story is important not because it is mine, God knows, but because if I tell it anything like right, the chances are you will recognize that in many ways it is also yours. Maybe nothing is more important than that we keep track, you and I, of these stories of who we are and where we have come from and the people we have met along the way because it is precisely through these stories in all their particularity, as I have long believed and often said, that God makes himself known to each of us most powerfully and personally. If this is true, it means that to lose track of our stories is to be profoundly impoverished not only humanly but spiritually.

Frederick Buechner



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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Where in your life or in the lives of the ones you care about can you see the guard dog of the “pro symptom position” get in the way of belonging and connection?
- How does one honour the very real work of the guard dog such that it can then become a helpful guide dog?

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FOR MORE RESOURCES

<https://carolynklassen.com/speaking/xplore-loneliness/>



SCAN ME