rated how intimate it was on a 7-point scale, ranging from superficial to meaningful

Figure 11.2 shows that even when men talked to their best same-sex friend, their interactions lacked intimacy. In contrast, they were more intimate when interacting with a woman, particularly if the relationship was a serious, romantic one.

Intimacy, in turn, promotes well-being. People who confide in others and share their concerns and feelings enjoy better health than do those who keep things to themselves (Pennebaker, Mayne, & Francis, 1997; Petrie, Booth, & Pennebaker, 1998). This is particularly true under periods of high stress. Following a stressful experience, such as the loss of a loved one or the breakup of an important relationship, many people join support groups, allowing them to share their thoughts and feelings with others undergoing similar experiences. Those who do so generally fare better than those who go it alone (Davison, Pennebaker, & Dickerson, 2000; Pennebaker & O’Heeron, 1984).

**C. Loneliness**

Considering how strong is our need to belong and the benefits social ties provide, it is not surprising that people feel bad when they lack this important resource. Such feelings are called loneliness. **Loneliness** is a distressing emotional state caused by a lack of meaningful interpersonal relationships. Although it has been called the common cold of psychological maladies, loneliness can be profoundly disturbing, leading to alcoholism, physical illness, and even suicide (Hawkley, Burleson, Berntson, & Cacioppo, 2003; Laudenslager & Reite, 1984; Peplau & Perlman, 1982). It also seems to be increasing. Rising divorce rates, the breakdown of the nuclear family, and increasing mobility in modern societies are three factors that, taken together, have caused loneliness to reach almost epidemic proportions.

Loneliness is not synonymous with being alone. People can feel lonely in a crowd or perfectly content when they are by themselves (Archibald, Bartholomew, & Marx, 1995; Hawkley et al., 2003; Long, Seburn, Averill, & More, 2003). At the same time, certain situations are apt to trigger loneliness. If you have ever moved to a new town or transferred to a new school, you are probably aware that situations like these...