

A scenic view of a lake with a forested hill in the background and a person sitting on a bench in the foreground. The text is overlaid on the image.

The Power Of Quiet For Your Wellness

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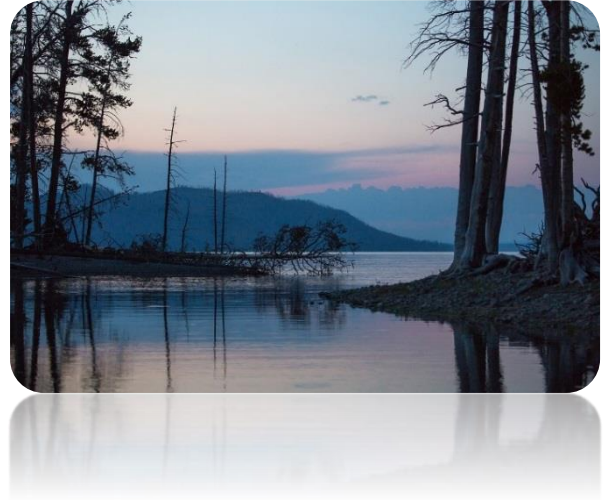
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The Need For Silence Today

The world is a noisy place. We are taught never to be still and never to be quiet. We are surrounded by noise.

We battle noisy traffic while listening to the radio on the way to noisy workplaces, and then rush back in the same noisy traffic to a noisy house.

Electricity streams into our lives and keeps us in an artificial, endless daytime mindset, as our phones are ringing, our social media alerts are pinging, and noise fills our world and our ears.



Our minds are cluttered with stresses, concerns, worries, and endless external stimuli.

We hardly ever or never stop to just be still and allow the mind to be **in quiet** and **be quiet**.

The mind that never experiences quiet, never switches off

The Negative Side Of Noise

Several studies have shown noise to have detrimental effects on general wellness and that peace and quiet can actually do quite a bit to support it.

- A 2013 study out of Italy found that the ringing of cell phones caused blood pressure to spikes in both male and female subjects.
- Another study showed that a noisy environment could overload short-term memory as the same part of the brain that processes recall also handles noise.
- Noise disrupts concentration, and according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, ambient noise increases stress and also aggravates stress-related medical conditions, including, heart disease, ulcers, migraines and high blood pressure and continued exposure to noise only worsens its effects.



White noise promotes the release of the stress hormone, cortisol, and excess amounts of this hormone impairs the functioning of prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that is responsible for impulse control, executive functioning and reasoning.

The prefrontal cortex also plays a role in the storage of short-term memory, and any changes to this part of the brain can impair the ability to think clearly and retain incoming information.

Have you ever found it impossible to think about something or to read and focus without making the room silent? Once noise, like the TV, radio and even people talking are eliminated, concentration and comprehension improve.

- A 2011 World Health Organization report stated that noise pollution is a “modern plague,” and concluded that overwhelming evidence exists that exposure to environmental noise has serious adverse effects on human health.

Silence is a recharge. It clears the mind, and supports calm and peace, which in turn has numerous benefits for health, wellness, and consequently quality of life.

Think about your life, how much time do you spend in total silence each day?

How Silence Serves Your Brain And Wellness

“All of man’s problems could be solved if he could just learn to sit alone in a room with himself for an hour” – Pascal (1623-1662)

The modern world is indeed loud and distracting, and silence may be increasingly difficult to come by, which impairs our wellness, serenity, and inner peace, but there are many reasons to make time for silence in your life.

Silence Reduces Tension And Stress

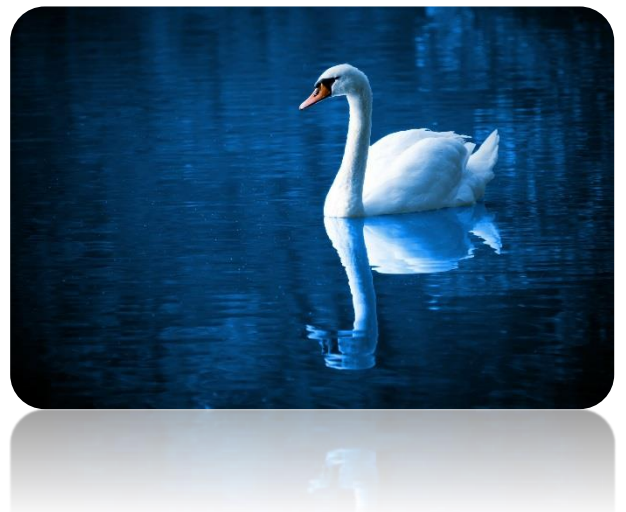
Noise can lead to high blood pressure and heart attacks, loud noise raises stress levels and promotes the release of the stress hormone cortisol.

Conversely, silence does the opposite, promoting calm, inner peace, allowing the brain to have a rest.

Research has shown that silence releases tension in both the brain and the body.

A 2006 study published in the journal Heart reported that just two minutes of silence elicited a better relaxation response including lowering blood pressure and affecting blood circulation in the brain than listening to relaxing music.

Silence eliminates the fight or flight stress response, and instead creates calm and relaxation, which lower stress and consequently promotes healthy immunity, and reduces risks for stress related diseases and conditions, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, headaches, and anxiety.



Replenishes Mental Resources and Restarts Brain Power

The modern world is filled with an over abundance of sensory input, which causes attention centers in the brain to become run down but you can restore them with silence.

The endless demands place a significant burden on the prefrontal cortex draining the ability to pay attention, causing mental fatigue and impairing the ability to concentrate and focus.

Silence restarts the brain and replenishes the mental resources needed to improve cognitive function. In silence, the brain gets a break, and just as a power nap restarts your energy, so silence restarts your brain.

Tap Into Our Inner Selves

Meditation, daydreaming and eliminating external noise by simply sitting in silence allows the mind to wander and just be idle.

This allows us to tap into our true inner selves, to discover new ideas, and focus on and engage our thoughts, memories, and emotions.

These processes allow us to create a better state of wellness for the body, mind, and spirit by creating meaning in our experiences, promoting creativity, and providing reflection that supports mental and emotional health.

Deep reflection is gained from silence, something that can never be achieved with the distraction created by external noise.



Improved Creativity

Excessive thinking and mental stimulation stifles creativity. In silence, your mind is free to just be, which allows your creative juices to flow freely.

Self-Control And Eliminating Self-destructive Patterns

The mind produces more than 60,000 thoughts a day and more than 80% of our thoughts repeat themselves daily.

Our thoughts drive our emotions and behaviors.

This means that more than 85% of our emotions and behaviors are preprogrammed by our habitual ways of thinking.

When you do not stop to quiet the mind, you will forever be a slave to your own thinking patterns and consequent habits.

The practice of quieting the mind puts you back in control, and allows your habits to serve you, giving you the freedom of choice.



Regenerates Brain Cells

Silence can help your brain to grow, as a study that was published in the Journal Brain, Structure found.

This study compared the effects of white noise, pup calls, ambient noise, and silence on the brains of mice.

While originally the intent was to use silence as a control factor in the study, the scientists found that only two hours of silence each day resulted in the growth of new cells in the hippocampus, the brain center responsible for memory, emotions, and learning.

Although these findings are only preliminary, there is a clear suggestion that silence is indeed helpful for the brain in growing new cells, and that it may have therapeutic value for conditions associated with decreased hippocampus neuronal regeneration, such as depression and Alzheimer's disease.



Inner Peace And Calm

Silence promotes inner peace and calm, both of which elude many in the modern world but are so necessary to promote a general state of optimal wellness. When you achieve a healthy state of inner peace your every day performance, mental state and emotional wellbeing is improved.

You are better able to handle stress, and improve your quality of life.

Inner peace allows you to achieve a new level of joy, and not from obtaining material possessions, or from external sources, but from inside yourself through a new perspective that supports harmony within your mind and spirit.

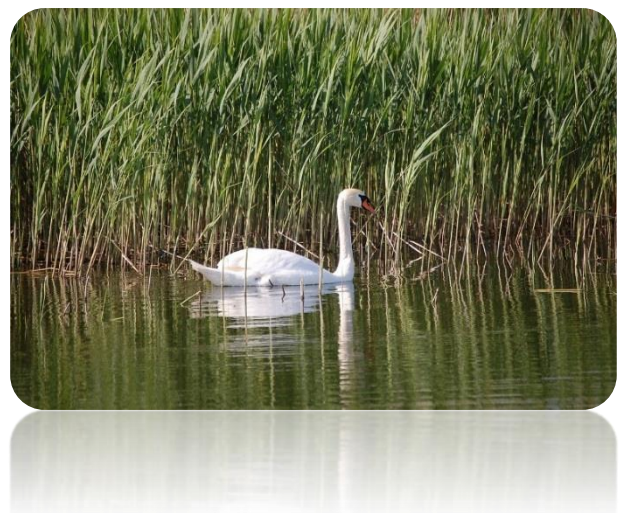


Cultivates Awareness

Cultivating awareness is a key solution to stress and its effects on the body, mind, and spirit.

Cultivating awareness of the present moment allows you to be so completely immersed in the “experience of the present,” that it suppresses any urge to let thoughts in that can trigger stress.

Controlled breathing, immersion in all of your senses and devoting your complete attention to the current environment and your body prevents the mind from being stuck in stress and consequently allows you to bypass its responses in the body.



Meditation is such a practice, where sitting in silence quiets the mind, induces an ultimate state of relaxation, and ultimately allows you to train your mind in such ways that you can master your internal responses to completely eliminate the stress response.

Just 10 Minutes Per Day

Begin with baby steps, as sitting in silence is not as easy as it might sound, and it takes practice.

Start with 3 to 5 minutes of silence each day and build up to at least 10 minutes daily.

Quiet, means quiet, so no television, no radio, no one in the room talking, no traffic noise, or sirens and no smartphones or email alert pings.

Complete silence.

Make every effort to clear your mind of any thoughts and simply focus on and listen to the silence.

Remember to breathe...

Breathe deeply and slowly, in and out. Breathing in the proper way allows you to release mental tension, focus your mind, and energize your body by oxygenating the blood.

Imagine a balloon inside your body and as you inhale you are filling that balloon and as you exhale the balloon is deflating.

This means full, deep breaths, expanding your lungs to full capacity and letting oxygen course through your body.

The more you practice at sitting in silence, the more your body will remember the experience to bring you more and more of its many benefits.



The Incredible Benefits Of The Present Moment

Silence is all about the present moment; stopping the constant flow of thoughts, worries, and concerns about the past and future and allowing the mind to just be in the moment.

Living in the present is another form of silence

It is not the deliberate state of sitting in silence, but training your mind to live in the present moment without concern for the past or future does turn off the many constantly streaming stressful thoughts that stem from those concerns that we experience each and every day.

Think about it: How many times have you failed to enjoy an experience because your mind was distracted with thoughts of some past or future trouble or worry?

It's good to learn from the past and plan for the future, but often **we use this to avoid dealing with our present situation in life, which might be overwhelming us or we miss out on enjoying the here and the now.**

If we never learn to find peace and enjoyment in the present, we feel constantly overwhelmed, anxious, and out of control, and this can lead to fatigue, depression, body aches, insomnia and a reduced quality of life and an inability to enjoy life.

Our senses are important in “bringing us home” to our experience of ourselves, in the present moment. **When we experience the present moment we become present to ourselves, so we become more authentic. We become our true selves. When we can let go of our fears, we can experience the caress of a fresh breeze on our face.**

When we are present with our sight, we can see the details of textures, colors, shape and form, that we otherwise would be missing. We can feel the cool air on our nostrils as we breathe in

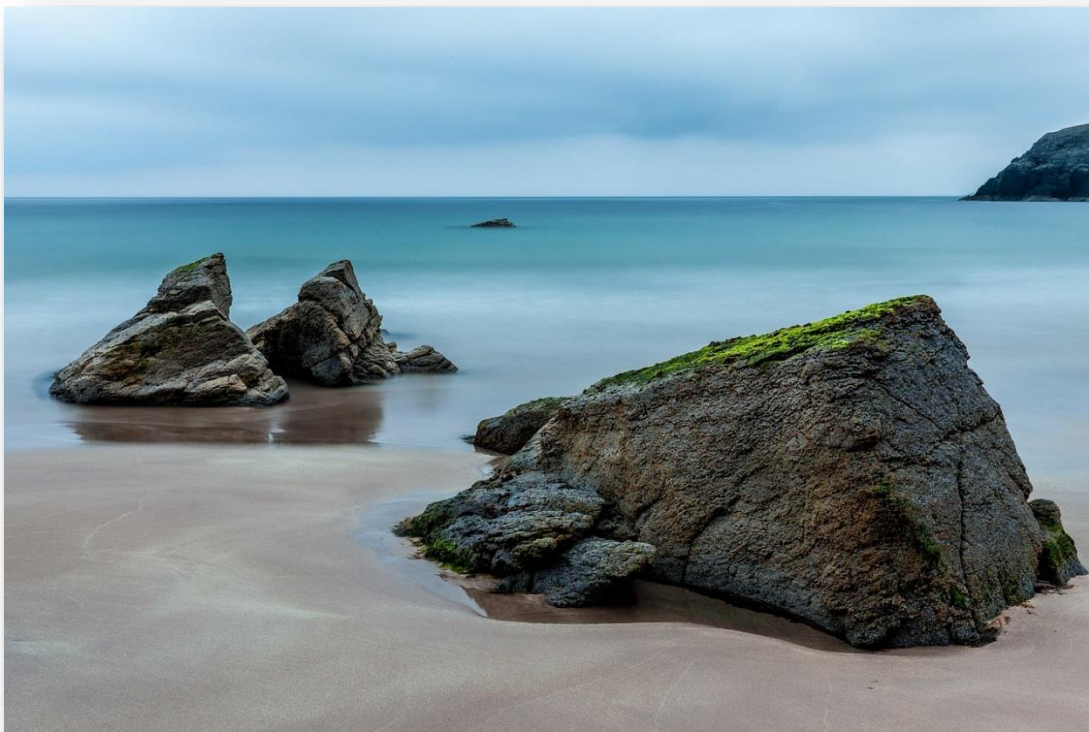


and the warmer air as we breathe out. We can feel the weight of our bodies against the chair as we sit. We can feel the softness of our clothes.

We can smell the fresh scent of soap when we wash. We can taste the flavor, see the bright colors, and feel the textures of our food.

We can listen to the sounds outside our window: trucks passing, birds chirping, dogs barking.

This brings us to the concept of mindfulness.



Mindfulness

What is mindfulness?

We hear about it a lot these days, but do you really know what it is and how to create the conditions for its existence?

It is found in many of the world spiritual traditions. The Sufis, the mystics of Islam, practice the concept of Presence. In mystic branches of Christianity, there is the concept of “centering prayer” where the “Presence of God” is the result of being mindful of a specially chosen “sacred word,” such as “Peace,” or “Love.”

Mindfulness is essentially “paying attention” to what is occurring in the moment

Zen Buddhism, for example, focuses on this practice of mindfulness. “If you are going to eat that cream cake, make sure you enjoy it!” was the comment a Zen Buddhist teacher once made.

In other words, don't go worrying about how it will make you fat, or how you shouldn't really be eating it, or how it is bad for your heart, or other such thoughts.

These types of concerns are thoughts that take you away from the experience of the moment, which in this case, is the enjoyable act of eating a lovely cake.

How does the cake look? How do you feel when you look at the cake? Notice that you salivate, you feel a little bit excited as you anticipate how delicious the cake is going to be.

Next, you experience how the cake smells and you experience a pleasurable sensation. Then you take a bite and experience the explosion of taste, chocolate, sweet and creamy, and silky, crunchy, smooth and soft, texture sensations inside your mouth. So much pleasure in each mouthful!



Mindfulness states that it is better to be “in” the experience of eating that cake than worrying about all its possible negative effects.

Obsessing about our thoughts, which tend to be mainly negative, is known as “rumination.” It is a common occurrence. This keeps us locked in either the past or the future and prevents us from being truly present.

We're either remembering something that happened in the past or we are worrying about what is going to happen in the future.

Our thoughts can be productive or non-productive.

If we find ourselves constantly ruminating on resentments, anger, fear, worry or despair, our mental environment is not conducive to good health and well-being.

If we can begin to notice the space, the silence, in between each of our thoughts, we begin to make contact with the present moment.

In that present moment, we can start to experience the beauty, which is ever present and calling us to be present with it, and we can begin to appreciate it and to experience it.

We live in a beautiful, exquisite world full of the mystery and the miracle of life. Yet for most of us, most of the time we are too busy to see it.

When we stop to contemplate the moment, when we just “stop and smell the roses,” we begin to see how much abundance exists within us and around us and we can begin to be extremely grateful for the priceless gift of life. When we do, we can feel gratitude.

We can experience pleasure and appreciation and begin to raise the quality of our thought environment from negative to positive.

Our lives go by very fast, and if we are not conscious of our thought patterns, we may end up angry, bitter, old and lonely. We may wonder how we got there and experience deep remorse for having allowed ourselves to let our lives go by in this fashion.

By developing mindfulness, we can become aware of the nature of our thoughts, and we can begin to cultivate a “thought garden” of beautiful thoughts of gratitude, appreciation, acceptance, and loving compassion, both towards ourselves and towards others.

There is a Zen expression, “Chop wood and carry water.” What does it mean?

It suggests that we try moving through each moment of our lives being fully alive and aware of what we are doing, instead of carried away on the river of our thoughts.

Our thoughts are like a radio that is not tuned in properly, resulting in a lot of static and extraneous noise: when the channel is clear and finely tuned, we hear the stillness loud and clear, as a meaningful fullness and presence that carries weight, almost; it is rich, and full of value.

It feeds our soul and helps us experience a genuine connection to all that is. This Zen saying encourages you to be mindful of your actions throughout your day, also. In other words, when you do one task, such as chop wood, focus your attention fully on the task at hand.

- Experience what you feel as you engage in the activity. When you carry water, be present to the act of carrying water.
- When you walk, simply walk.
- When you eat, experience the tastes, color, and texture of the food as you see it, taste it, chew it, and swallow it.

Let your senses help you to engage in your actions, one by one. In this way, your thoughts will recede and even disappear. You will be mindful.

- ✓ Thoughts, people, environments, can all be toxic and detrimental to our well-being, or they can be nourishing and wholesome, increasing our well-being.
- ✓ We can choose to nourish ourselves by choosing soothing and relaxing environments rather than busy, noisy paces filled with artificial light.
- ✓ We can choose friends who are positive, kind, and supportive and avoid people we cannot trust, who do unkind things or who are dishonest.
- ✓ We can nourish our minds by choosing thoughts, which are uplifting, self-loving, compassionate, and positive.

This might take some practice. First, we have to get mindful so we can even notice when we are having a negative thought.

Then, we have to practice detaching from the intrigue and the allure of the thought, and being able to let go of the thought.

Then, we are in a good position to practice positive thoughts, which will become habitual over time, and eventually, the positive thoughts will outweigh the negative and we will be experiencing happiness on a regular basis.

How To Practice Mindfulness

- Sit comfortably, with your feet on the floor, your spine straight. Roll your shoulders back and down.
- Take a couple of deep breaths in, and out, in and out.
- As you continue to breathe, become aware of the in-breath by focusing on the cool air as it goes into your nostrils. Feel your belly fill. Notice the warmer air as you exhale it through your nose.
- Feel your body still and heavy.
- Listen to the sounds around you.

- Come back to focusing on the in breath and the out breath.
- Each time you notice your thoughts have wandered off, just remind yourself to focus once more on the breath.
- Breathe in. Breathe out.
- That's it.
- Mindfulness.

You can practice this for a few minutes every day. Just 5-10 minutes is all that is necessary for you to reap the benefits over time.

Meditation

There are many different kinds of meditation. Mindfulness is simply one form of meditation. Mindfulness is the art of focusing the mind on one object at a time, or one sensation at a time.

Meditation can take many different forms such as visualization, guided imagery, progressive muscle relaxation, contemplation, mantra, breathing meditation, loving kindness meditation and so on.

The main difference in defining the two is that in meditation you take a chunk of time out of your day in order to go and sit somewhere, where you will not be disturbed, in order to “do” your meditation practice.



Meditation is silence, and one of the best mind-body practices to give the mind a break from external stimuli and allow for the many healing benefits of quiet

Whether you take 5 or 10 minutes, or up to an hour or more, is an individual choice that also depends on how long you have been practicing meditation.

Usually the meditator commits to a daily practice that may be done early in the morning, or in the evening, or both.

Mindfulness can be done anytime, anywhere and takes but a moment. The more moments of mindfulness, you string together throughout your day, the more you will have the experience of being mindful.

Mindfulness does not require a special place or time. It is something that can be done as you go about your daily tasks. Its goal is to bring you into a greater awareness of the present moment.

Scientific Studies Show Numerous Benefits To Both Meditation And Mindfulness

- ✓ Studies show that meditation increases immunity, mental focus, and feelings of well-being, self-esteem, and self-acceptance.
- ✓ It decreases anxiety and depression, feelings of loneliness, stress, and isolation and enhances social bonding.
- ✓ It has also been shown to reduce blood pressure, lower heart rate and reduce inflammation.
- ✓ It can help with symptoms of PMS and menopause and can decrease the severity of asthma attacks.
- ✓ Significantly reduces stress and anxiety that are linked a host of serious health problems, and 60% to 90% of doctor visits are stress related.
- ✓ A significant reduction in death, heart attack, and stroke in subjects who practice transcendental meditation.
- ✓ Studies show that cancer patients have recovered more effectively when practicing meditation.
- ✓ The relaxation response brought about by meditation lowers blood pressure, improves heart rate, breathing, and promotes healthy brain waves
- ✓ Integrative body-mind training results in brain changes that may protect against mental illness. Meditation has also been linked with axonal density or the increase of signaling connections in the brain and increases in myelin, the brain's protective tissue.
- ✓ Promotes healthy sleep.



Final Thoughts

Practicing all four elements of quiet daily...moments of silence, living in the present, meditation, and mindfulness allows you to reach the ultimate state of wellness and good health.

Get started today!

