



## **Can you hear the sounds of silence?**

We live in a busy world. Technology, devices, internet, social media and the pace of life have all sped up over the last few decades.

Many of us avoid being alone, because we can't tolerate the emotions, thoughts or memories that emerge. So we stay super busy. We can also use substances such as alcohol, marijuana, nicotine or other drugs to alter our experience and as a way to run from ourselves.

Some people like to use the term 'multi-tasking'. This term would fit to describe someone who can do concentrated work while at the same time having a video playing and/or music going on. Some have implied that the human brain has developed and progressed to have a capacity to do more things at the same time. However, brain researchers have concluded that the human brain has not evolved to develop another capacity that it didn't already have. In fact, brain researchers have concluded that our minds have become overloaded.

In contrast to our busy overloaded minds, I encourage you to consider simplifying your mindset. Simplifying your schedule of activities and to do's can bring some peace into your being. Our minds are like a radio with an unlimited number of stations. Sometimes it seems there are radio waves flowing unhindered into us and through us. With mental practice over time, we can learn to filter the thoughts in our mind, developing and choosing which radio stations to be on.

A first step is to become "comfortable in our own skin". Can you go for a walk or workout without ear buds? Can you be in your living space without the tv, internet or some audio happening? Being alone like this may cause anxiety in us. However, slowly increasing the minutes that we can be comfortable alone and without distractions can allow anxiety to be replaced by tranquility. This would bring an experience of relaxation and comfort.

The goal would be to quiet the outside noise and then quiet the insides of us. Consider having a 'quiet time' to begin each day. Maybe use reading, journaling, meditation, prayer or listening to peaceful music or songs, or find another way to create a quiet time.

In reality, we already have enough going on in our own head without focusing on another device or type of mental stimulation. How can we even hear our own thoughts or listen to our heart or spirit, if we are constantly bombarded with mental and visual stimulation? Some people state they feel lonely even in a crowd. Our goal would be to be okay with being alone.

There are healthy mental skills to be practiced, learned and lived. These will lead to lifestyles of balance and thoughtfulness. Young people today especially need to learn the skills to be comfortable with being alone with their own thoughts. It is not something that is happening with teens or young adults who have grown up with phones, computers, games, streaming, videos, social media and other technological innovations. But, they will need to be ok being alone as they move out of the nest.

I suggest spending time finding what brings peace to your mind and heart. What makes you feel relaxed? An added benefit to simplifying our lives and mind is that our sleep can develop to be a restful and recharging experience with dreams that inspire us.

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