



00 INTRODUCTION

Each of the activities included are ones that I have used in my own personal pausing and times of stillness. I would suggest that the best way to use them is to choose to do a different one each week but you can just dip in and out if that works better for you. It's fair to say that there is a time commitment to these sessions, and that seems to go against the whole idea of being still, but I feel that you will gain so much more from the time you are able to invest here. It may well be that some of the activities don't work for you and that's fine. Focus on those that allow you to be still.

01 BE STILL

Quotes to think about

"Pausing is part of living and breathing." Do Pause: You are not a to do list - Robert Poynton

"We do not adequately recognise the importance of silence in our lives."

Hinduwebsite.com

Have a go

Try sitting down with a cup of tea or coffee for a few minutes with the express aim of just pausing and being still. Use some quiet music or just sit in silence. If it makes it easier, try having your break or lunch without the TV, radio or social media and don't forget to turn your phone to silent! Make a decision to do this each day. Don't worry if you miss a day. Try and make it a habit.

The "Be Silent" Challenge

Set a timer for 3 minutes and just sit in silence. You may find this easy, you may find it hard, but I hope you come to love the beauty of silence. As you try each of the different sessions included the amount of silence in the challenge will increase. Go mad and give it a try!

02 BE STILL WITH YOUR THOUGHTS PART 01

Quote to think about

"Writing regularly can help us process events, emotions, and experiences throughout our day."
talkspace.com

Have a go

Morning Pages is an exercise that is part of Julia Cameron's "The Artist's Way" and here is the explanation taken from her book as an introduction.

"Put simply, the morning pages are three pages of longhand writing, strictly stream-of-consciousness; "Oh, god, another morning. I have NOTHING to say. I need to wash the curtains. Did I get my laundry yesterday? Blah, blah, blah..." They might also, more ingloriously, be called brain drain, since that is one of their main functions.

There is no wrong way to do morning pages. These daily morning meanderings are not meant to be art. Or even writing. I stress that point to reassure the non writers working with this book. Writing is simply one of the tools. Pages are meant to be, simply, the act of moving the hand across the page and writing down whatever comes to mind. Nothing is too petty, too silly, too stupid, or too weird to be included.

The morning pages are not supposed to sound smart – although sometimes they might. Most times they won't, and nobody will ever know except you. Nobody is allowed to read your morning pages except you. And you shouldn't even read them yourself for the first eight weeks or so. Just write three pages, and stick them in an envelope. Or write three pages in a spiral notebook and don't leaf back through. Just write three pages... and write three more pages the next day."

Buy yourself a cheap A5 notebook and try and do your Morning Pages every morning. The aim is to do three pages every morning for at least the next 8 weeks and then look at activity 09 "Be still with your thoughts part 02". Don't worry if miss a morning or two. Just pick up where you left off. Don't read anything you have written until the 8 weeks are up. You may need to get another A5 book if you run out of pages. It seems a little daunting to start with but it really is worth the effort and perseverance. I have found it really useful and illuminating.

The "Be Silent " Challenge

Set a timer for 5 minutes and just sit in silence. Enjoy the beauty of silence.

03 BE STILL AND BE THANKFUL

Quote to think about

"Practicing gratitude, which means being thankful for the good things in your life. It's helpful to do this every day, either by thinking about what you are grateful for or writing it down in a journal. These can be big things, such as the support you have from loved ones, or little things, such as enjoying a nice meal. It's important to allow yourself a moment to enjoy that you had the positive experience. Practicing gratitude can help you to see your life differently. For example, when you are stressed, you may not notice that there are also moments when you have some positive emotions. Gratitude can help you to recognise them."medlineplus.gov

Have a go

Spend 20 minutes just thinking about the things that you are thankful for. You can just write whatever comes into your head or perhaps have a think first. This is not ignoring that you may have stuff going on right now but it's a way of celebrating the good things that you do have in your life whether they are many or few. Perhaps start with writing each time "I am thankful for..." and then finish the sentence as a recognition of the good in your life. If you need to stop writing for a little while and think a bit more about what you are thankful for, then that's great too. Whatever is best for you. Spend a little time with your "I am thankful for..." list and add to it. Then grab a brew and sit and read through your list and enjoy a moment of thankfulness. Try and do this everyday. If you're thankful for someone why not tell them. Just a thought.

The "Be Silent " Challenge

Set a timer for 7 minutes and just sit in silence. Enjoy the beauty of silence.

04 BE STILL WITH NATURE

Quote to think about

**“The quickest, most powerful way to create a mental shift is via contact with nature and beauty.”
Do Pause: You are not a to do list - Robert Poynton**

Have a go

Try going for a walk everyday through your local park or green space. If you can, sit and be still and enjoy the nature around you, but if not, enjoy walking and listening to the nature around you. If you're not able to get out and you have a garden / yard then sit outside or with the door or window open and enjoy being with nature that way. If you prefer you can always go onto YouTube and search for bird sounds and sit, listen, watch and engage with nature that way. Try it each day.

The “Be Silent “ Challenge

Set a timer for 9 minutes and just sit in silence. Enjoy the beauty of silence.

05 BE STILL AND BE POSITIVE

Quotes to think about

“Nothing is more appealing than speaking beautiful, life-giving words. For they release sweetness to our souls and inner healing to our spirits.” A Proverb

“When you perceive your life negatively, you can start to see yourself and your life through a negative lens...”. pronghornpsych.com

“Say something positive about yourself. How you think about yourself matters a lot when it comes to how you feel. If you perceive life negatively, you will end up viewing all experiences negatively. Instead try using words that will strengthen your personal power and promote your self-worth.” psychreg.org

Have a go

Choose one of the phrases from the next page and be still and reflect on it. Choose to reflect on these positive words. Allow them to take on a life of their own. Once you feel you have finished with one particular phrase, then move onto another one. Feel free to create your own positive phrases. Each day use the positive words sheet. Look again at ones that you have already reflected on and then add in a new one. Just be still and allow the life from the words to encourage you. Try not to just think about them once in the day. Try and think about them throughout the day if you can.

The “Be Silent “ Challenge

Set a timer for 11 minutes and just sit in silence. Enjoy the beauty of silence.

Positive Words

I am not going to let my mistakes define me, but make me better.

I am thankful for...

I am going to forgive myself.

I am using obstacles to motivate me to learn and grow.

I am going to make it through this.

I am turning down the volume of negativity in my life, while simultaneously turning up the volume of positivity.

I am not going to engage with negative people.

I am forgiving and gentle with myself, and with my mistakes.

I am not going to compare myself with others and I will not let others do the same to me.

My past might be ugly, but I am still beautiful.

My past will not dictate my future.

I let go of the negative feelings about myself and accept all that is good.

I am strong.

Forgiving those who have hurt me, heals me.

I am a beautiful person inside and out.

I am free to learn and grow at my own pace.

I choose positivity.

I am blessed; my blessings make me feel even more grateful for being alive every day.

I'm valuable.

I am beautiful.

People are good.

Goodness is everywhere.

I choose to have a kind attitude towards everyone that comes my way.

06 BE STILL AND BE CONTENT

Quote to think about

“We are all works in progress.” Wabi Sabi by Beth Kempton

Have a go

We're going to reflect on the wisdom of Wabi Sabi through the book by Beth Kempton. In using this to be still we're trying to be content with life at this specific moment of time. We're not ignoring the issues of life, but just trying to find a moment of stillness and hopefully clarity. The back cover from the book introduces the wisdom.

“Wabi Sabi is a captivating concept from Japanese aesthetics, which helps us to see beauty in imperfection, appreciate simplicity and accept the transient nature of all things. Wabi Sabi is a refreshing antidote to our fast-paced, consumption-driven world, which will encourage you to slow down, reconnect with nature and be gentle on yourself. It will help you simplify everything, and concentrate on what really matters.”

It is really hard sometimes to be content with the issues in our life but being still can help us to gain a more realistic perspective and help us with possible ways forward. Use “The wisdom of Wabi Sabi” sheet, on the next page, each day, as you practice being still. Allow its wise words to captivate your mind.

The “Be Silent “ Challenge

Set a timer for 13 minutes and just sit in silence. Enjoy the beauty of silence.

The wisdom of Wabi Sabi

Introduction

“One of the core teachings of Wabi Sabi is the acceptance of the true nature of life: everything is impermanent, imperfect and incomplete.”

The Past

“Accepting the past...here’s the thing: the past is no longer here. Whatever happened, the good and the bad, it is gone. Whatever it is that keeps pulling you back, take a moment to make peace with it, then let it go.”

The Present

“Wabi Sabi teaches us to accept that the past was then, and it was what it is was. This is now, and it is what it is. Your life is happening right here, and every day is the beginning of the rest of it.”

“Acceptance is not about giving up or giving in. It’s about surrendering to the truth of what is happening, and then playing an active role in deciding what happens next.”

The future

“We are all works in progress.”

“What if you imagined yourself as a beautiful handcrafted pot, lovingly shaped and appreciated because of, not in spite of, your imperfections? What if you acknowledged texture, character and depth are what underlie your natural beauty, inside and out? And what if you recognised how all that has shaped you along the way has made you who you are today?”

“Perfection is a myth. You are perfectly imperfect, just as you are.”

07 BE STILL AND BE SPIRITUAL

Quotes to think about

“Spirituality is your belief or sense of purpose and meaning. It is what gives you a sense of value or worth in your life.” webmd.com

“Spirituality influences many decisions that people make. It encourages people to have better relationships with themselves, others, and the unknown.” webmd.com

Have a go

A document produced by mental health organisations and communities in Bradford talks about spirituality as referring to “the essence of human beings as unique individuals: “What makes me, me, and you, you?””. It explains:

“It is the power, energy and hopefulness in a person. It is life at its best, growth and creativity, freedom and love. It is what is deepest in us – what gives us direction and motivation. It is what enables a person to survive bad times; to be strong; to overcome difficulty; to become themselves.” spiritualitymentalhealth.org.uk

I’m not sure what you think when you hear the word “spiritual” and whether you automatically think of the word “religious.” It may be positive or negative association or there may be no response at all.

You may or may not have a connection to a faith community but that doesn’t matter. We can all connect with the spiritual aspect of our lives, if we choose to, through lots of different ways. Use the “Be still and be spiritual” sheet and reflect on the spiritual aspect of your life. If you don’t have one or see the need then just use the time to be still. If you do acknowledge there is a spiritual aspect to your life and even something higher than yourself, be still and engage in a way that feels appropriate to you.

The “Be Silent “ Challenge

Set a timer for 15 minutes and just sit in silence. Enjoy the beauty of silence.

Be still and be spiritual

Here’s some suggestions of things perhaps you wouldn’t think of as spiritual.

- **Living by a set of rules that you set for yourself. For example, how you treat people.**
- **Focusing on spiritual values such as honesty, kindness, hope and compassion.**
- **Find out what makes you feel peaceful, loved, strong, and connected.**
- **Dedicate part of your day doing community service.**
- **Read inspirational books.**
- **Take a walk outdoors.**

- **Play your favourite sport.**
- **Dedicate quiet time to yourself.**

And some things that you may associate with spirituality.

- **Practicing yoga.**
- **Meditation and prayer.**
- **Belonging to a faith community.**

08 BE STILL AND THINK OF OTHERS

Quote to think about

“Performing a selfless act increases one’s sense of gratitude, as one is in a position to do something generous for another person. Doing a kind act for another person can increase the sense of feeling connected to another person, which in turn helps people see the worth and value in their own lives.” Desreen N. Dudley verywellmind.com

Have a go

Simply be still and think of an act of random kindness that you can do for someone else, just because you can and not because you have to. The “Be still and think of others” suggestions sheet on the next page gives a list of 50 suggestions to get you started. You can think of the act of random kindness first and then think of the person or you can choose an act that you will do for someone today or through the week as an opportunity presents itself.

The “Be Silent “ Challenge

Set a timer for 17 minutes and just sit in silence. Enjoy the beauty of silence.

Be still and think of others suggestions

- 1. Call a friend that you haven’t spoken to for a while.**
- 2. Send a letter to someone.**
- 3. Send flowers to a friend.**
- 4. Offer to pick up some groceries for your elderly neighbour.**
- 5. Send someone a handwritten note.**
- 6. Offer to babysit for a friend.**
- 7. Walk your friend’s dog.**
- 8. Tell your family members how much you love and appreciate them.**
- 9. Help your parents with household chores.**
- 10. Help a friend get active.**
- 11. Make someone laugh.**
- 12. Offer to cook for a friend or family member.**
- 13. Make a cup of tea for a friend or family member.**
- 14. Help with a household chore at home or for a friend.**
- 15. Host an informal get together and invite your neighbours to get to know each other.**
- 16. Tell someone you know that you are proud of them.**
- 17. Tell someone you know why you are thankful for them.**
- 18. Send a motivational text to a friend who is struggling.**
- 19. Send someone you know a joke to cheer them up.**
- 20. Send someone you know a picture of a cute animal.**

21. Send an inspirational quote to a friend.
22. Send an interesting article to a friend.
23. Put a surprise note or drawing on someone's desk.
24. Contact someone you haven't seen in a while and arrange to meet face to face.
25. Engage in conversation with a shop assistant when paying at the till.
26. Spend time playing with your pet.
27. Sign up to do voluntary work in your local community.
28. Reach out to spend time with a friend, family member or neighbour who is experiencing loneliness.
29. Have a clear out and take items to a charity shop.
30. Make and send a care package to someone who needs it.
31. Make a donation to a charity.
32. Offer to pick up a friend or family member from work.
33. Make a cup of tea for your colleagues.
34. Get to know the new staff member.
35. Lend your ear - listen to your colleague who is having a bad day.
36. Say good morning.
37. Bake a cake for your colleagues.
38. Give praise to your colleague for something they've done well.
39. If it's raining - lend someone your umbrella.
40. Take someone out for lunch instead of eating at your desk.
41. Give up your seat to an elderly, disabled or pregnant person.
42. Let someone jump the queue at the supermarket.
43. Take a minute to help someone who is lost.
44. Have a conversation with someone who is experiencing homelessness.
45. Help a parent carrying their push chair down the stairs or hold the door for them.
46. Let a fellow driver merge into your lane.
47. Pick up some rubbish lying around in the street.
48. Smile and say hello to people you may pass every day, but have never spoken to before.
49. Return a lost item to its owner.
50. Pop into a coffee shop and ask to pay for a coffee for them to give to someone later that day for free.

from www.mentalhealth.org.uk

09 BE STILL WITH YOUR THOUGHTS PART 02

Quote to think about

“Without reflection, we go blindly on our way, creating more unintended consequences, and failing to achieve anything useful.” Margaret J. Wheatley

Have a go

I hope that you have enjoyed your regular Morning Pages sessions. It's time to look back at what you've been writing. Here's how Julia suggests you should do it.

“Read your morning pages! This process is best undertaken with two coloured markers, one to highlight insights and another to highlight actions needed. Do not judge your pages or yourself. This is very important. Yes, they will be boring. Yes, they may be painful. Consider them a map. Take them as information, not an indictment.

Take Stock: Who have you consistently been complaining about? What have you procrastinated on? What blessedly have you allowed yourself to change or accept?

Take Heart: Many of us notice an alarming tendency toward black-and-white thinking: "He's terrible. He's wonderful. I love him. I hate him. It's a great job. It's a terrible job," and so forth. Don't be thrown by this.

Acknowledge: The pages have allowed us to vent without self destruction, to plan without interference, to complain without an audience, to dream without restriction, to know our own minds. Give yourself credit for undertaking them. Give them credit for the changes and growth they have fostered."

Take some time to ponder on what you have read, highlighted and reflected on. Does this lead you anywhere?

Take time also to decide whether you will continue to do your Morning Pages or whether it was just for a season, or something that you will return to at a future date.

The "Be Silent " Challenge

Set a timer for 19 minutes and just sit in silence. Enjoy the beauty of silence.

10 BE STILL AND BE SILENT

Quote to think about

"I've begun to realise that you can listen to silence and learn from it. It has a quality and a dimension all its own." Chaim Potok, The Chosen

Have a go

First off, set a timer for 25 minutes and just sit in silence. Enjoy the beauty of silence.

Then go and make a brew and treat yourself to something lovely and edible, whatever that might be. As you sit and eat, look back over the last 9 weeks of being still in a variety of ways. Celebrate and reflect on the time you have taken to be still and the journey that you have taken.

Thank you and congratulations on investing so much time "being still." Hopefully you have come to love and value it. What happens next on your journey of "being still?" You decide!

Please do get in touch and let me know how you have found these sessions. Thanks

Pete

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