

Enjoying The Militant Silence

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I love the silence in the treatment room when I get acupuncture treatments. After my practitioner reads my energy, selects points and inserts needles, I am alone, resting on a comfortable table. I am aware of my energy, ready to embrace change. Feeling energy realign, I am better prepared on the inside for challenges of the day-to-day world.

There is a paradox at play. Enormous change is occurring within, while outwardly, there is no obvious action. Balancing energy is as powerful as movements of the ocean, thunderclaps in the sky, and can be faster than new spring growth after rainfall. People with balanced energy have a wonderful impact on others and that is how we know something good is happening. Like wind, we can't see the balanced energy, but we can see and feel its impact.

I sometimes think of American practitioners of Chinese medicine as a gentle army standing up to protect people from societal demands. Defending the right to replenish ourselves. This is certainly how my corporate clients think of their acupuncturists. When I refer corporate leaders to colleagues, they often report "an odd sense of peace" during and after treatments. Treatments provide stark contrast to their demanding lives.

Silence is part of the recipe for transformation. The quiet room creates space for change. The change reveals itself as improved health.

Yet, our society seems so loud. Media messages assault our senses daily. Email, texts, and social networks create hundreds more inputs per day that require our attention. The focus is external, not internal. On action, not observation.

Searching For Peace and Quiet

The most common complaint I hear from leaders is that they lack time to step away, observe and reflect. They believe they will be more productive if they get more quiet time for themselves.

The astronauts talk about this. Rising above the Earth, they looked down and see the Earth in the context of deep space. They see figure and ground simultaneously: the Earth and the vast beautiful space that surrounds us. The brain interprets this as "peace," which is what one feels when true perspective is achieved.

We know this and have taught ourselves to back away from situations in order to see them clearly and become less reactive. But, are we also backing away from life's noise so we can hear ourselves think? As the popular lyric tells us, "from a distance, there is harmony."

But, we must find silence and transformation whenever and however we can. My greatest challenge came when my son, Daniel, was a baby. I was still in that exhausted, disoriented phase trying to add "mother" to a string of more comfortable roles I was already playing that included: teacher, mentor, wife, consultant, practitioner, and board member. As a new working mom with an infant, I had no role models and was surprised, day after day, by what this little person needed. I

tried to find ways of adapting to his constant requirements while continuing some aspects of my life as I knew it before motherhood. I also struggled to include self care into very demanding work weeks.

Exercise was my salvation - something to return to that I loved. Securing two half-hour sessions per week at the local YMCA, I'd drop Daniel at the crèche, which offered 30 minutes of childcare. They were 30 minutes of gold.

Quickly scanning the room, I'd find an exercise bicycle with a reading stand. Placing a carefully selected travel magazine on the front of the bike, I'd relish 30 minutes of bliss simulating cycling in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Before marriage and children, I traveled lightly. Now, every trip was encumbered by supplies: baby equipment creating readiness for any inevitable infant need. My magazines were my last remaining window to the world, reminding me of pre-family lightness. There, at the YMCA, I'd cycle by bright pictures of the azure seas of Greece, juxtaposed between shimmering white limestone mountain villages - or live in scenes from New Mexico's red rock country during sunsets, when the sky blazed and the Earth basked in its glow.

Mentally, I'd travel to these places, pedaling my way through magic lands except...I couldn't shut out the noise!

Mid-morning, alone, in the exercise room, eight speakers blared noise from two commercial radio stations, which competed with a TV set on high volume. I heard pop music, car sale ads, cosmetic commercials followed by shrill blaring music. It was ugliness to the ears. My peaceful, idyllic inner life could not compete. Sound won the war over my senses.

I politely asked if they might turn the sound down, or perhaps play only one source at a time. But they said no and the decision was final. I returned to the workout room and resumed my ride, cycling furiously to maximize the remaining time, increasingly frustrated that my request was not even remotely heard.

Perhaps it's easier to go to an acupuncturist, let him or her read your energy, select points. Then lie on the table and enjoy the quiet peace. Let your practitioner provide care and quiet, and maybe you can join the ranks of militantly silent.

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