

USG SGM ~ STILLNESS ~ DECEMBER, 2020

drawn from Soul Matters materials, see the full packet for more of all of these elements

www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com



Introduction

Often when stillness weaves its way into our discussions, it's framed as a retreat strategy. A balm from the frantic and frequently wounding world. But as wise ones ... remind us, that's not quite right. It's less like a locked room that keeps all the enemies out and more like an oxygen mask that brings us back to life, that fills us with power. Stillness doesn't simply slow our breath and energy; it fills us with it.

[W]e don't really want to be told to be calm these days. There is indeed so much to be angry about. So much that needs [to be] defended, resisted and restored. To listen deeply to our troubled times is to hear a call to challenge the view that stillness is the resting place at the bottom of the hill we've climbed and instead imagine it as the basecamp that launches us into the long trek up the mountain.

And alongside this vision of stillness enabling us to gather strength also sits the equally important idea of stillness as something that clarifies our perception. It allows us to perceive that which is truly precious. And in doing so, it calls us back to our humanity.

Spiritual Exercises

Take a pic of your calming place

We all have one, even if we don't realize it or think of it this way. Our calm place. Some place or space that moves us into stillness as we move into it. A favorite bench overlooking a favorite view. That unique trail in the woods by our home. Some body of water that has our heart. For some, it is a corner of our house. ... For some it's an emotional not physical space created by listening to a piece of beloved music ... Whichever it is, deepen your relationship with your "calming place" by capturing it with a picture. In the end, it's not the picture itself that is the spiritual exercise, but the process of capturing the moment of stillness and peace that your treasured space graces you with.

Sit still and stare at another

This one may be the most challenging and intimidating exercise of this month: Spend a minute or two staring into the eyes of a family member or friend. Here are a number of videos to guide you on your way. (If doing it intimidates you too much, consider adapting the exercise by simply mindfully watching the videos labeled "inspirational video" and "Couples giving it a try.")

- Video with explanation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ei1EaY_ytZg
- Inspirational video: <https://www.happify.com/hd/60-seconds-with-a-stranger-can-be-magical/>
- Couples giving it a try: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xm-T3HCa618>

Chalice Lighting

Don't tell me to be calm
when there are so many reasons
to be angry...
I didn't say to be calm, said the wind,

I said to breathe.
We're going to need a lot of air
to make this hurricane together.
Rev. Lynn Unger, from her poem Breathe

Check-in *Share your highs and lows since we last met focusing on what drains you and what lifts you up. We give each other the gift of listening without asking questions or offering advice to allow people the safety to share what's in their hearts.*

Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

I'm taking the day off.

Quiet as a feather.

I hardly move though really I'm traveling

a terrific distance.

Stillness. One of the doors

into the temple. *Mary Oliver*

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom. *Viktor E. Frankl*

Rest is a form of resistance because it disrupts and pushes back against capitalism and white supremacy. *Tricia Hersey*

Out beyond ideas of wrong doing and right doing there is a field. I'll meet you there. When the soul lies down in that grass the world is too full to talk about. *Rumi*

Through the sacred art of pausing, we develop the capacity to stop hiding, to stop running away from our own experience. We begin to trust in our natural intelligence, in our naturally wise heart, in our capacity to open to what arises. *Tara Brach*

Questions *Pick the one question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of Stillness means for you and your daily living.*

1. When were you saved by finding a "still space" in the midst of chaos?
2. What if the doorway into spiritual stillness is learning to look at your present life and say "This is enough?"
3. We all have things that press our buttons, that send us into anger, trauma or that just shut us down. It's so easy to lose our ability to carve out a space between stimulus and response. Between what "stimulus" and "response" do you wish you could create more still space?
4. Is your identity rooted in busyness or stillness? And which one do you *want* it to be rooted in?

Sitting in Silence *Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon your thoughts.*

Sharing/Deep Listening *Respond with your thoughts and experiences with the topic. We create a safe space by listening deeply and not responding. When sharing, connect with what is true for you. When listening, give the speaker your full attention rather than thinking about what you will share.*

Reflection and Gratitude *This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared. Consider lifting up one comment or experience for which you are particularly grateful.*

Extinguishing the Chalice with song [Find a Stillness, #352](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5PCmFJTkW8)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5PCmFJTkW8>

Find a stillness, hold a stillness,
let the stillness carry me.
Find the silence, hold the silence,
let the silence carry me.
In the spirit, by the spirit,
with the spirit giving power, I will find true
harmony.

Seek the essence, hold the essence,
let the essence carry me.
Let me flower, help me flower, watch me
flower, carry me.
In the spirit, by the spirit, with the spirit giving
power, I will find true harmony.