

## *Making Time for Silence*

True silence is the rest of the mind. It is to the spirit what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment.

—William Penn

“**W**HAT’S PLAYING IN YOUR EAR?” Magazines interview celebrities with this question, highlighting what music they save to their iPods. A better question might be “Do you ever find time for silence?” The outside world bombards us with the kind of noise that spikes our stress—sirens, traffic horns, jackhammers, leaf blowers. Indoors isn’t necessarily a place for refuge. Restaurants pipe in music so loud that it’s impossible to converse. At home, sounds often compete. One person vacuums while the other turns up the TV.

The Census Bureau reports that people rate noise as the biggest problem in their neighborhoods, more than crime or litter. With so many sounds surrounding us, it’s important to appreciate the benefits of quiet times and ways to create them. You can even make a game of “keeping silence” that makes the whole process fun.

**Set up quiet areas in your home.** In preschool we ask children who seem tired or upset if they’d like to spend time in a quiet corner. Teachers also ask other children not to disturb classmates who are taking time to recharge. It’s easy to set up spaces for stillness in our homes—putting pillows in an out-of-the-way corner or making a hideout in the back of a closet.

**Turn on a timer for silent time.** You can try this during dinner clean-up, while you are driving, or right before bed. See how long your family can go without making a sound.

**Talk about the benefits you feel when it’s quiet.** “It’s so silent now, I can really concentrate.” “I can hear my inner voice when it’s quiet and I feel more relaxed.”

**Point out children working or playing without making noise.** You can note the intensity of a child’s concentration or the self-control siblings are showing when they play quietly.

**Notice background noise and how you can counteract it.** We don’t want children to live with cacophony because they’ve learned to shut it out. Teach them to pay attention to various sources of sound and how to turn them off to create a more quiet environment.

One has to experience silence in order to discover its restorative qualities. That’s why it’s up to parents and teachers to try to make a place for stillness in our busy schedules.

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