

Being Fully Present

Socrates had a theory that once someone discovered what was best for them, they would do it. I'd love to think that was true but I know that it isn't always true. I know exercise is good for me but I don't always make the time and effort for it. I also know that if I take some time each day for some quiet reflection or meditation I feel so much better. I find that it changes my perspective just enough to feel calmer and less stressed. So why don't I make time each day for such a beneficial thing? I'm not sure, I often think that meditation and looking after a 4 year old aren't always compatible but that isn't necessarily true. I think one of the reasons is that I think I have to find 45 mins to an hour to see the benefit. The reality is that even five minutes can make a huge difference. I really want to encourage you to try and introduce some time for yourself, time for some quiet contemplation and prayer into your day.

Prayer means many things to many people but I would like to invite you to see prayer and living fully in the moment in the now. Being fully present to the person you are with and fully present to the task you are doing, even if it something as mundane as sorting the washing or walking the dog. I invite you to engage each of your senses, to not rush through the activity but be fully alive to it. Imagine eating your sandwich at lunch time, feel the texture of the bread against your hands and skin, taste the saltiness of the butter, smell the grains of the bread, hear the crunch as you bite into it. Feel the sensation of chewing the bread and the feeling of it sliding down your throat. Be fully alive to the experience. Try not to rehash what has happened in the past or worrying about the future but just enjoying the now.

You don't need a long time to enjoy a moment of quiet contemplation, below are some practices that you can introduce into your day that only take 5 mins.

Go to a place where you can be quiet for five (or more) minutes. It can be outdoors, at home or in a bathroom. Maybe you are travelling on a train, bus or plane. Wherever you are – *wherever you are* – is a place of presence.

- Make it simple. Today you do not need candles, incense, music or a prayer shawl. No fountain, icon, chair or prayer beads, Just you and however you can show up right now, in this moment. The cosmos is big enough for all your joy, and all your pain. Just show up.
- Breathe. Simply breathe. Notice the texture and temperature of the air you inhale. Breathe enough oxygen to feel movement in your body. Expand your chest and stomach.
- Exhale. Let go. Let go of everything that does not serve you or the integrity of the other. The universe knows what to do with the let-go's. We don't have to do anything except let go.
- Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe out. Breathe in. Allow each inhale to be deeper, every exhale deliberate. Feel energised move and shift in your body as your cells oxygenate.
- Awaken your senses. Be present to yourself and your surroundings. Notice what attracts your attention and stay with that. Simultaneously turn your attention to your breathing. Continue for as long as you desire. What do you notice?
- Draw in the deepest breath of your day. Perhaps the deepest breath of your life. Breathe gratitude. As you exhale, let go into the present moment.
- Allow your breathe to companion you through your day. Whenever you experience stress, worry or a desire to be present more completely to a person, place, idea or the Holy One, take a five minute break.

One of the hardest parts about silence and contemplation is finding your mind wander, so here are a few things that might help:

- Understand that your mind will wander, thoughts will pop into it, just accept that it will happen
- Richard Rohr's in *Simplicity* suggests that you imagine you are looking out upon a fast moving stream and every time a thought pops into you head, simply place it in a boat and send it down the river, in the boat, down the river.

- Another way is to imagine a wide blue sky and your thoughts simply clouds upon the sky, let the clouds and thoughts drift away.
- Be patient with yourself.

– Kristen Hobby