



A Simple Thing

Hearts and Minds Newsletter
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Each month, this newsletter highlights a simple wellness practice that you can use in your daily life. Simple things, which are often easier to understand than they are to do, hold great potential for changing our experiences, our relationships, and our lives.



Written by
Mary Ann Christie Burnside, Ed.D.
Founder and Executive Director of *Hearts and Minds*

Mary Ann is a psychologist, mindfulness educator, and relational coach. She works with adults and children in a variety of settings to promote the psychology and spirituality of well being.

Email Mary Ann at
maryann@withheartsandminds.com

At *Hearts and Minds*, we teach adults and children how to cultivate their innate capacities for awareness, acceptance, and kindness. Visit www.withheartsandminds.com to sign up for a course or contact us about bringing an educational event to your school, workplace, or other organization.

Do less. Be more.

For many of us, December is a time of year when our levels of doing take on a frenetic pace. We might think that a month is not enough time to do all that we need to do, which can make our doing even more stressful. We think that's just the way it is or has to be at this (or at any) time of year but it isn't. It doesn't.

This month's practice is about *being*, which is the opposite of doing. Often, we dismiss "being" because it seems so unproductive: If we're not doing something, then we're probably doing nothing, which is exactly the point. Why do nothing when you could be doing something? Because it's good for you.

Why?

Although some of us seem to thrive on the busyness of doing, setting time aside to just be is healthy for all of us. For one thing, it provides much needed rest, which our minds and bodies need to be and stay well. In addition, slowing ourselves down – even for a few minutes a day – allows us to connect more deeply with ourselves, with others, and with our own surroundings. These connections can bring us closer to the joy that's inherent in our being (think of how you feel when you can just *be* in your favorite place).

When we let ourselves be, we usually start to loosen our grip on all things, including judgment (particularly self-judgment). We stop chasing the next thing that we think will (or should) happen. We sometimes get better at waiting. We start to relax or at least slow down. And we begin to

notice what's in front of us - the people and daily experiences that matter most to us. There's a stillness in being that's peaceful. There's nowhere to go and nothing to do.

Rest, joy, relaxation, and peace. How many of us wouldn't pay to have these experiences every day? If you're like me, you would, but we don't have to pay. Each of us has the capacity to give ourselves rest and relaxation and to create joy and peace in our lives. Reading or thinking about it isn't enough to know how to do it. Each of us has to come to learn to just be with ourselves through experiential practice. Try it! It's free.

How do I practice?

During this month, make a habit of creating a little quiet time for yourself each day. Even 5 minutes a day will be enough to begin. Here are 4 suggestions for getting started.

1. Find a space in your home where you can be alone. Let other family members know that when you are in there, you expect to be uninterrupted (think "knock only in case of blood or fire").
2. Set up the space so that you can be comfortable and feel inspired. Include things in the space that matter to you (a favorite pillow, a picture, a statue, a painting).
3. Choose a time of day when you will sit quietly (it's best to be consistent, so select a time that will work for you 7 days a week).
4. Figure out how long you will sit for and keep a timer on hand to help you keep track.

Suggestions

- *Try 5 minutes a day at first. Work with slight increases after a week or so if you would like more time.*

- *If you find yourself thinking that you can't take five minutes a day for yourself, then sit for two minutes a day and think about that.*

Once you have prepared your space, visit and sit at the time of day that you've determined works best for you. Just let yourself be in your space for the allotted time. Sit comfortably. Be aware of the thoughts and feelings that come up while you sit. Don't try to stop these *mind states*. You can't. Notice your thoughts and feelings but don't tend to them. There's nothing you need to do but learn to let go.

Other Resources

There are many books on the nature of being. I recommend anything by Jon Kabat-Zinn. Email me at maryann@withheartsandminds.com if you would like additional suggestions.

I've recently discovered the contemplative poems of Donna Faulds. "Walk Slowly" (included below) is from her collection titled "Go In and In," which is available at www.amazon.com

"Walk Slowly" by Danna Faulds

It only takes a reminder to breathe,
a moment to be still, and just like that,
something in me settles, softens, makes
space for imperfection. The harsh voice
of judgment drops to a whisper and I
remember again that life isn't a relay
race; that we will all cross the finish
line; that waking up to life is what we
were born for. As many times as I
forget, catch myself charging forward
without even knowing where I'm going,
that many times I can make the choice
to stop, to breathe, and be, and walk
slowly into the mystery.

“There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.”
– Albert Einstein

If you found this month's issue or practice helpful, consider forwarding this free publication to a friend or family member.

New readers can subscribe to receive future issues at www.withheartsandminds.com

Happy Holidays!

