

Aired 4/25/2021 – [Watch on YouTube](#) (high-speed available)

You must have a room, or a certain hour or so a day, where you don't know what was in the newspapers that morning, you don't know who your friends are, you don't know what you owe anybody, you don't know what anybody owes to you. This is a place where you can simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be. This is the place of creative incubation. At first you may find that nothing happens there. But if you have a sacred place and use it, something eventually will happen.”
— Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*

Silence is a powerful presence. This week we explored the constant presence of noise, and the balm that is silence.¹

We live in a world of constant distraction and noise. We are constantly reacting to all the stimulation pouring down on us – phones, computers, social media, constant draws on our attention from devices and from other people who ask for our attention 24/7.

In addition to digital noise, we are assaulted by man-made disturbances – machinery, jets overhead, car horns, trucks, doorbells – you name it. These may be the sounds of progress, but are far from the quiet, life-restoring sounds found in nature. This constant noise drains us, even when we don't realize it.

Is this true of your life? Do you notice the noise around you? What effect does it have on you?

In addition to adding to our stress and overload, this overwhelming stimulation diminishes our ability to be fully aware of what is going on around us, to focus, to appreciate. When we talk on the phone, respond to an email, and check the news, all at the same time, we are not more productive. Multitasking is a myth – it means only that we are doing several things at the same time badly.

In her book, Jackman leads us through her story of finding the power and solace of silence in her own life and in the experience of others. She writes “the one thing I was certain of was that silence appeared to be a common factor in accessing something profound.” *Why might this be true? Do you agree? Have you been in periods during your life when silence has been especially important? What profound truths can be better accessed in silence?*

¹ For this talk, I used as a reference Christine Jackman's *Turning Down the Noise: The Quiet Power of Silence in a Busy World* (Murdoch Books, 2020.)

Silence gives us the freedom to stop, to rest, simply to be. She writes “For the longest time I had assumed that if I simply stopped, something awful would transpire. Was it possible that the very opposite was true—that I might discover something astounding?” *Do you find it difficult simply to stop? What practices help you?*

Jackman reached her appreciation of the power of silence through her development of a meditation practice. She learned to be comfortable with herself and her own thoughts, a huge step for many of us. She learned to observe, to rest, to simply be present without adding anything to the moment.

She also talks about meditation as “The Next Big Thing” in wellness, noting its many cognitive, emotional, and physical benefits. Research tells us that meditation can literally alter four neural pathways – those used for stress management and recovery, attention and focus, compassion and empathy, and the pathway related to our sense of self. The good news is that it’s never too late to begin.