



## Serenity: Why Finding Peace and Tranquility Matters

Peter, Susan and their three school-aged kids are a typical family. School, work, errands, after-school activities, and the responsibilities of running a household occupy most of their time. Serenity is rare in this busy family home. “Our household is always hustle-bustle. Finding time for peace and relaxation? Huh, that’s a laugh,” says Susan. Peter adds, “Sure, I love having some quiet time for myself. But it’s just an occasional luxury.”

### **Serenity—not a luxury, a priority!**

Actually, serenity is more than just an escape from work and family life. It promotes personal and professional growth by providing opportunity for self-exploration and self-understanding and by restoring energy.

So often we identify ourselves by the roles we play—parent, teacher, engineer, husband, wife, son, daughter, and so forth. We get accustomed to these roles and sometimes lose sight of our deeper selves. As such, roles and routines can limit self-discovery and fulfillment, which is why finding some undisturbed, quiet time every day is so important. During those periods, you can identify aspects of your life that you are unhappy or dissatisfied with and explore possibilities for change and improvement. Times of serenity also can unleash your creative potential.

But these times don’t have to be consumed by deep thought and the conversations people have in their heads. Just “being,” whether absorbed in a book, meditating, or munching popcorn alone at a movie, can be beneficial. Like a nap or a good night’s sleep, serenity can restore energy and give a sense of renewal.

### **Serenity on the subway?**

Even if you don’t doubt the benefits of peace and solitude, you may question how you can possibly find the time—and *where*. The truth is opportunities for total self-absorption can be found whether you’re by yourself or in a crowd:

- Use your 45-minute subway commute to close your eyes and engage in self-talk.
- Take a walk on your lunch break.
- Sneak away once a week for a quiet lunch alone.
- If you’re desperate, lock yourself in the bathroom, turn on the fan to drown out household noise, and sit peacefully for 15 minutes. Few people are interrupted in the bathroom!

The key is to *make* the time—every day.

## **Hobbies and interests**

Lose yourself in something you truly enjoy. A special hobby or interest will remove you from the roles and routines that otherwise define your daily life. Look for activities that offer an escape and total self-absorption. Don't overlook any activity's potential for bringing meaning to your life. For example, even if you work at a computer all day, you may find surfing the Web for 30 minutes before bed pleasurable and restful.

## **Silence is golden**

Today's world is one of overstimulation and noise. Even when you think you are hearing nothing, the refrigerator, air conditioning, and other appliances provide a constant hum. Many of us habitually turn on the TV or radio to provide background noise. Silence, although not necessary for finding serenity, provides an opportunity to really hear your inner voice and listen to your thoughts and feelings. Or, escape outside to remove yourself from everyday household or workplace noise and enjoy the soothing sounds of nature.

**By Christine P. Martin**

**Source:** *Solitude: A Return to the Self* by Anthony Storr. The Free Press, 2005; *The Call of Solitude: Alonetime in a World of Attachment* by Ester Schaler Buchholz, PhD. Simon & Schuster, 1999; *The Simple Living Guide: A Sourcebook for Less Stressful, More Joyful Living* by Janet Luhrs. Broadway Books, 1997.

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