

Mindfulness  
For Everyday Living  
YMCA.  
1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays  
13:30 – 15:30



Silence isn't the absence of life, but the place we can hear ourselves most clearly.

## Our discussion paper for November 18<sup>th</sup> is – Silence is Golden... or is it?



This topic is inspired by Marg starting her SSShhh!! Silent Meditation group. For some people, silence is where they find their peace. Some people seem naturally drawn to stillness and silence, as though quiet moments offer them a sense of ease and belonging. For others, silence feels unfamiliar or unsettling, stirring restlessness or self-consciousness instead of calm. These differences aren't a matter of strength or weakness; they simply reflect the unique ways our minds, histories, and nervous systems have learned to respond to the world. Which are you and do you understand why?

There are several reasons why silence feels more natural to some people than others. It's not simply a personality trait—it's shaped by upbringing, nervous-system patterns, culture, and experience. Here are the main factors:

**Different nervous systems** - Some people have naturally calmer or more regulated nervous systems. For them, silence feels soothing, others have more reactive systems, so when things go quiet, the body becomes alert, as if something might be wrong. Silence feels like a gap where danger or worry could appear.

**Upbringing and family atmosphere** - If someone grew up in a home where silence was normal—reading, resting, or simply “being”—they usually feel comfortable with quiet as adults. But if silence in childhood meant tension, conflict, or emotional distance, it can feel threatening later in life.

**Cultural and social conditioning** - Some people come from cultures or communities where silence is valued—seen as respectful, reflective, or peaceful. Others grew up where constant conversation, noise, or activity was the norm, so silence feels unfamiliar or awkward.

**Personality differences** - Introverts, for example, often recharge through quiet and internal reflection, so silence feels like home to them. Extroverts may find energy through interaction and sound, so silence can feel empty or dull. These are tendencies, not rules—plenty of introverts dislike silence and plenty of extroverts love it.

**Level of emotional self-awareness** - People who are used to noticing their thoughts and feelings—through journaling, therapy, or meditation—tend to settle into silence more easily. Those who haven't had that practice may find it overwhelming because silence brings their inner world to the surface.

**Previous experiences with silence** - Someone who has had positive experiences of stillness—walks in nature, quiet mornings, mindful moments—builds an internal association of silence with comfort. Someone whose quiet moments were filled with worry or overthinking will associate silence with discomfort instead.

**Relationship with their own mind** - If a person sees their thoughts as “background noise,” silence feels spacious. If they see their thoughts as stressful or intrusive, silence can feel like being left alone with a loud or unpredictable mind.

**Skill level in presence** - Silence is something we get better at. People who practise meditation or reflective activities often develop an ease with silence that others simply haven't learned yet.

## 🌿 Why silence can feel intimidating 🌿

**We're not used to it** - Modern life is full of noise—phones pinging, traffic, conversations, background music. Silence can feel unfamiliar, and anything unfamiliar can be unsettling at first. When the noise stops, it can feel as though something is missing.

**Silence removes distractions** - Noise keeps us occupied. When it falls away, our attention naturally turns inward. Thoughts, emotions, and memories that are normally pushed aside become noticeable. This can feel uncomfortable, especially if we're not used to being with ourselves fully.

**Silence highlights vulnerability** - In silence, we might feel exposed—there's nothing to hide behind. This can create a sense of unease, as if we're waiting for something to happen or unsure of what's expected of us.

**We often associate silence with tension** - Culturally, silence can suggest awkwardness, disapproval, or anticipation. Phrases like "the silence was deafening" or "awkward silence" reflect this. So, when silence appears, even in meditation, our minds may automatically interpret it as something negative.

**The mind prefers activity** - The human mind is wired to scan, judge, plan, and interpret. Stillness goes against that habit. When asked to sit quietly, the mind can react with restlessness, boredom, or anxiety, simply because it's not being fed stimulation.

**Silence brings presence**—and presence is powerful - Stillness draws us into the present moment. For many people, that level of clarity or intimacy with experience feels intense at first. It's a bit like stepping into a large, empty room where every small sound echoes.

## 🌿 Why some people embrace silence with open arms – or ears 🌿

Silence can offer a surprisingly rich and positive experience for many people. For some, it provides a sense of spaciousness—a gentle pause from the constant demands of everyday life. In the quiet, the mind has room to settle, thoughts become clearer, and emotions soften rather than pile on top of one another. Silence can also feel grounding, allowing people to reconnect with themselves without distraction or pressure. Those who find silence beneficial often describe it as restorative, like giving the nervous system a chance to breathe. It can enhance creativity, deepen self-awareness, and create a feeling of inner steadiness. In this way, silence becomes less an empty space and more a nourishing one.

## 🌸 Mindfulness can bring benefits into our everyday lives 🌸

Mindfulness can gently deepen our relationship with silence by helping us meet it with curiosity rather than resistance. By paying attention to the present moment—our breath, our senses, or simply the feeling of being here—we begin to notice that silence isn't empty at all, but alive with subtle textures and calm clarity. Over time, this practice makes quiet moments in everyday life feel less like interruptions and more like invitations to pause, soften, and reconnect. In this way, mindfulness transforms silence from something we fall into by accident into a space we can consciously inhabit with ease.



**The key point** - Silence isn't a talent—it's a learned comfort and it's perfectly normal for people to have very different reactions to it. It's a mindfulness tool we can all learn to use with a bit of practice and patience.

**Sit with your favourite beverage and reflect whether or not silence is an old friend or does silence disturb you... and ask yourself why... and joy down your answer and bring it with you.**

**Or alternatively meditate on the subject, and still bring your conclusions with you 🙏**

Would you be surprised to know there's a label for people that struggle with silence? There is and it's **Sedatephobia**, although it's not a formal clinical diagnosis — rather, it refers to when silence or stillness is experienced as unsettling or distressing.

I thought I'd include this from Tara Brach, if you are uncomfortable with silence, it will guide you to show yourself compassion. It applies to anything and everything in life.

The acronym RAIN is an easy-to-remember tool for practicing mindfulness and compassion using the following four steps:



You can take your time and explore RAIN as a stand-alone meditation or move through the steps whenever challenging feelings arise." — Tara Brach

Once you're familiar with it, you can **stop and drop** into RAIN, another tool for your mindfulness toolbox 🌸

Do visit Tara Brach's site [here](#) for more information and guided meditations.

**You can use this R.A.I.N. method anytime you are feeling stressed, overwhelmed or out of touch. It's a powerful way of homecoming in a challenging time.**

**R: The "R" in the R.A.I.N method stands for 'Recognise.'**



Take a moment to recognise that a strong emotion is present and gently turn towards what you're experiencing in an open and non-judgemental way.

Tune in to the direct present moment experience of what is happening in your body and mind... the emotions, the thoughts and sensations that are here.

It can be helpful to mentally name it, for example, "I am feeling stressed" or "I am feeling overwhelmed." This recognition of what you're

feeling, opens up inner space and brings you into full contact with yourself and the actuality of the present moment.

**A: The "A" in R.A.I.N stands for 'Allow.'**

Allowing means to 'let it be as it is.' It is the acknowledgement and acceptance of your present moment reality. Allowing doesn't mean we have to *like* the situation. It means we aim to soften (or drop) our mental resistance to what is happening.

The reason this is so important is because we often have the unconscious impulse to push away, suppress or ignore difficult situations. When we engage in an inner struggle in these ways, we unknowingly create *more* suffering and tension.

In this unconscious struggle we also tend to get 'caught up' in our thoughts and emotions, therefore we are more likely to *react* rather than being able to choose a conscious response.

By allowing, we're able to bring an inner 'yes' to our present moment experience. You may notice, almost immediately, a sense of softening and ease around the emotion.



**I: The "I" in the R.A.I.N. exercise stands for 'Investigate.'**

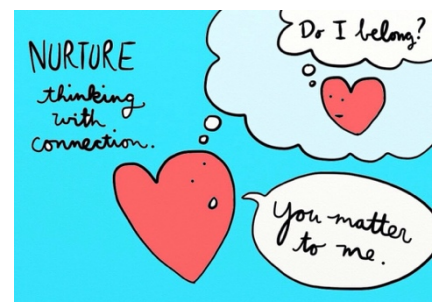


Now that you have recognised and allowed this emotion you can choose to investigate it. You may not always feel you need the "I" step as sometimes just the recognition and acceptance is enough. At other times you may feel naturally drawn to using this step. So, to investigate, you can mentally enquire with questions like "Why do I feel the way I do?" - "Are there events that happened ahead of the emotion that might have influenced it?" - "Are there physiological factors (Such as not getting enough sleep) that are affecting the emotion?" - "What do I really need right now?" - "Are there actions I could take to nurture and support myself (and/or others) in this difficult time?"

**N: The "N" stands for 'non-identification.'**

In the "N" step of R.A.I.N, you turn your attention to the simple realisation that YOU are not your mind nor are you your emotions. You are the awareness that is always there underneath every thought, emotion and sense perception.

Non-identification means that your sense of who you are is not fused with or defined by your thoughts and emotions. This brings about a natural sense of freedom and ease. It gives a sense of having peace in the middle of it all. No matter how intense and painful the emotional storm, there is always a part of you which is still, silent and untouched.



These questions can help us come into wiser relationship with emotions and thoughts. With this process of investigation, we can also choose a conscious response to foster a more meaningful life. Investigation may even resolve and dissolve the emotion completely at times (although it is not the goal).