New Years: Changing Your Life in Those Quiet Moments

By Sharon M. Rivkin, M.A., M.F.T. for Hope After Divorce

Enjoying the fire blazing with my cup of coffee on New Year's morning, I took a big sip and a deep breath and thought to myself…"I need more moments like this." Then, I realized that if more of us, including myself, paid closer attention to those particular moments in our lives, we might hear the quiet message that alone time brings.

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What did I conclude from how I felt on New Year's morning? That I needed to slow down and take more time for myself. That was a powerful moment because it made me realize that, by doing those two things, I would be a more balanced and less stressed person. Plus, those around me would also benefit from this change.

This experience made me reflect on the whole concept of creating New Year's resolutions and how most resolutions are task-oriented rather than internally driven. For example, resolutions often include losing weight, lowering blood pressure, exercising more, and quitting smoking or drinking. These are all tasks that don't cause you to think or reflect; you just do. But internally driven goals come from a more quiet state where important messages come out of the stillness. And these are the messages that are full of information about you and quite possibly about what you should be doing to have a better life. And, if you think about it, having a better life will create more peace within yourself.

So here are five ways to create stillness among the madness and busyness of our daily lives:

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1. Walking to reflect. Most of us walk to lose weight and get our heart rate up. But did you ever think to walk mindfully? This means noticing the flowers, the trees, the sound of water, the beautiful architecture, and the birds. By experiencing the beauty and feeling of the outdoors, you'll glide into a more reflective state where your problems take a back seat and out-of-the-blue thoughts come to the forefront.

2. Journaling. The purpose of journaling is to write about your inner thoughts, uncensored, which help you uncover and release feelings that you may have not let surface because you've been so busy. Once you write down what you're feeling, you may acknowledge what's *really* going on under the surface. It'll grab your attention, leading you to make changes in your life, whatever they might be.

3. Meditating. The point of meditation is to quiet your mind from its constant chatter. The chatter makes things bigger and insurmountable, which causes more stress and anxiety. By quieting your mind on a consistent basis, it creates a cumulative, calming effect in your daily life which, in turn, gives you more opportunities to reflect. And it's in those moments of reflection where you gain clarity and perspective.

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4. Listening to music. Music that touches the heart instantaneously calms you and smoothes out the daily turmoil. In fact, you almost forget that you have any problems when beautiful music touches your soul. We've all experienced the power of music, so we need to make listening to it more of a priority in our daily lives.

5. Sharing with your partner. Sharing is different than talking. It's part of that reflective process where you feel safe enough to reveal your thoughts and dreams to your partner. By doing so, communication gets more intimate, and you feel closer with one another. In contrast to quieting your mind, this mutual feedback reflects the information back to you in a different way.

Just as I experienced a message in the stillness of my New Year's morning, by using these five ways to create calm and quiet within, you, too, have the ability to hear your inner voice above the daily noise and make significant changes in your life.

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Also known as the "last ditch effort therapist," Sharon M. Rivkin, therapist and conflict resolution/affairs expert, is the author of Breaking the Argument Cycle: How to Stop Fighting Without Therapy *and developer of the First Argument Technique, a 3-step system that helps couples fix their relationships and understand why they fight. Her work has been featured in* O Magazine, O Newsletter, Redbook, Reader's Digest, *Time.com, CNN.com, Prevention.com, and WebMD.com. Sharon's appeared on Martha Stewart Whole Living Radio and makes regular radio appearances nationwide. Sharon is also a contributing expert at HopeAfterDivorce.org, DivorceSupportCenter.com, FamilyShare.com, and CupidsPulse.com.*