

5 Simple Ways to Come Alive in Silence



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With two of my oldest girlfriends giggling by my side, my yoga mat strapped to my back and my BPA-free water bottle in tow, I stood at the top of [Kripalu's](#) highest hill, ready for my first full weekend of [TriYoga](#) at the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health.

I breathed in the mountain air my mother had always told me about as I gazed out over Kripalu's expansive grounds, now glistening and dewy from the sunrise. Giggling, chatting and loving this time away together, my girlfriends and I entered the breakfast dining hall.

Silence.

Nothing but the abrupt sound of us ceasing to gab as we read the sign, "Please observe silence in the dining hall during breakfast hours."

A dining hall filled with people, no speaking, just the clinking of forks and knives as yoga-goers fully savored Kripalu's delicious breakfast. How will we manage this? We three girls together without talking and laughing ... impossible! "We might not make it through the next 15 minutes, much less the weekend," I whisper to Mary Anne. Just then, I see Alexis choose the farthest possible breakfast table. It is pushed up against the wall, and its chairs are facing giant, gorgeous spiritual paintings. I catch onto her no-talking-no-laughing strategy, and I sit down, with an empty chair between us just to make sure.

Clink, clink, yum. The three of us carefully distract ourselves from the no talking thing by reading the dining menus and salt facts without accidentally making eye contact with one another.

"Mmmmm, this food is incredible," I think to myself as my lips part to say it out loud. "Buddha on the wall, Jenn. Look at the Buddha on the wall," I repeat to myself. I imagine the echo that would occur in the room if we allowed our uncomfortable laughter to escape. Alexis and I make accidental eye contact; her lips squeeze tightly trying not to smile. We feel our usual burst of laughter diffuse in an airy snort through each of our noses. "Sorry," I mouth to her, smiling. "Jenn," I say to myself, "you work around noise all day. Just be quiet. Isn't silence what you want? Why do you always have to talk anyway? Shhhh and ohmmmm."

Minutes pass. I hold the food on my tongue a bit longer and realize that I'm noticing flavors in a refreshing way. During this meal I'm not conversing, reading or watching TV. I realize that I'm eating healthy, organic food that is out of this world -- I need to copy these recipes. I can feel the textures and the tastes fill my taste buds. Silence overflows

from my body, mind and soul as if it were always there; as if it were always my way of being. I look at Alexis again. She smiles the appreciative smile that I was feeling in my heart. I notice the view of the sky, mountains and valleys. Even my own mind-chatter and to-do lists rest blissfully.

Pure silence while eating with friends feels amazing. So many of us feel such discomfort in silence, especially when we are with friends.

Alexis points to a painting that she likes. Mary Anne smiles and gives me the feeling that she's excited to get to yoga. I sit, feeling a truer, calmer connection to my two old friends. I begin to wonder what we're all always chatting about. What level of our most authentic selves is being covered up because we so rarely sit together in silence? What levels of anxiety are we frequently releasing and soothing, back and forth, among one another? Which silly jokes can go left unsaid here and there to let in a little more truth in silence?

By sitting in silence, alone or with others, we give the brain a rest and allow our deepest selves -- or spirit -- to just be. We move and behave differently in the world when we are coming from a place of simply being. We're scared of the feelings that come up in silence. We feel uncomfortable in our insecurities and our fears. We live in a society filled with distractions to choose from. Happy thoughts fill us in silence. Sadness, nervousness and fear also fill us in silence. When we sit as conscious observers of our own feelings we are allowing our whole selves to just be, without judgment.

I look at Mary Anne. Lost in the last bites of her fresh breakfast, she looks so awake and peaceful as her eyes fall upon the various versions of Buddha on the wall.

Tranquility had filled us in just one priceless morning -- and one huge lesson.

This is Kripalu, where you will enter the silence of your deepest self at breakfast, and bring that truest self into your day. My days at Kripalu were filled with passionate yoga, meditation where I could ease into my own silence, belly-laughter with friends and the most delicious nourishment of which breakfast was just the beginning.

5 Simple Ways to feel Wholeness and Connectedness from Silence

1. Choose one meal a day that you will eat in complete silence, without any distractions. Allow thoughts, to-do lists and feelings to pass by like logs floating away, down a river. Simply observe what comes up and allow it to pass on by.
2. Take a walk with a friend or family member, and make a plan to walk in silence from one point to another, and then back again. Observe any uncomfortable feelings that emerge, and observe how you feel once you have eased into your own silence.
3. When something really exciting or positive happens in life or work, stay in that place of blissful silence before telling others about it. Stay with the feelings you have about this positive occurrence. Bring your happy energy into your day, knowing you will tell the good news once you're ready.
4. Notice when you are eating, shopping, watching TV or engaging in other behaviors for the purpose of distraction. Sit or walk in silence for 3-5 minutes. Be the compassionate mother to yourself, and allow all of your feelings to be without judgment. Sit in uncomfortable feelings and they will subside. Ask yourself, What can I learn from this feeling? What is it trying to tell me? How can I grow?