

# SILENCE: THE PATHWAY TO WISDOM

by Ronald L. Mann, Ph.D.

Many years ago I sought out professional help from a clinical psychologist after a loss of a relationship. After nine months, I felt at peace with the issues that brought me there. This man provided good advice and counsel for my relationship concerns. I liked him and became accustomed to our weekly sessions. I decided to continue even though I no longer had a “problem” that I wished to solve. I was curious what might come up in this dedicated hour of change.

I remember sitting in a contented and still place watching my breath and looking inward. I could feel something arise out of the vast expanse of my inner life. I could see something begin to form within my inner vision. Just as this presence became stronger, my professional “facilitator of change” began talking about something, totally interrupting this process. This scenario repeated itself over and over again during the next few weeks. I attempted to teach him how to remain present and silent with me in order to allow this transformation process to unfold. I attempted to teach him how to consciously participate with me in this silent process. After three week and \$300.00, I gave up attempting to educate him. In spite of my request for his silent participation in my learning, he could not contain himself, be still, and consciously hold a space of stillness. Over and over again he would start babbling about something as this inner presence began to emerge. I believe the enfolding energy was too

much a threat to his ego consciousness and he could not allow it. I was sorry to leave because I liked him. He lost a client and a good source of income due to his inability to tolerate this deeper space. What a paradox! All he needed to do was nothing in order to do something. He was attempting to be helpful in the only way he knew.

In my work as a psychologist, I found that allowing a space of silence in which I was totally present was very helpful. It does not work if you are thinking about other things, daydreaming, or just being inattentive. You must be fully connected with the persona you are attempting to help. Then, a powerful presence can help in the change process. This presence is a real energetic force that allows for transformation to unfold. This process moves beyond time and really speeds up change. If you are interested, you can read more about this in my book, [Sacred Healing: Integrating Spirituality with Psychotherapy](#).

## The Challenge

The Bible says, *Be Still and Know That I Am God*. What does this really mean? How hard is it to be quiet? Try it sometime and find out for yourself. There are several levels of silence. The outer and most obvious is “stop talking.” Can you do it? Can you actually just listen to someone without having to say something? Try it with your kids or your spouse. Can you be

100% present and listen without interrupting and needing to immediately interject your thoughts and ideas?

Another aspect of outer noise and distraction is radio, TV, cell phone, and the Internet. Can you spend one hour, one day, or one week without the outer noise that is generated by these electronic devices?

The next step is inner silence. Do you know how to stop the endless chatter of your mind? Do you know how to create an inner garden of peace and tranquility without random chatter, impulses to get up and act, to accomplish something, to do something? How hard is it to just sit there and be still?

Most of us cannot tolerate real silence and do not know how to create real inner silence. The outer silence makes us anxious because it brings our inner life to the surface. We need the outer noise to distract us from our inner reality. Give it a try, just sit in silence and follow your breath. Just let yourself be aware of your experience and notice what you feel. Are you comfortable, happy, at peace? Or do you feel inner pressure to get up, a compulsion for action just for the sake of action?

Try sitting in front of someone and looking into her/his eyes. Don't speak, stay present, and notice how you feel. Are you comfortable, relaxed, open, and present? If not, what else is stirring within you? Also, be aware of what you feel or perceive from the other person. You might be surprised at how much you discover in the realm of silence and attention.

## **What is the value of learning to be still?**

***Communication: Your relationships will deepen and your heart will open when you learn how to listen.***

Most often people interrupt each other and stop communication. We tend to anticipate what the other is about to say and jump in. We feel misunderstood so we are quick to defend our position and interrupt to make our point and prove out "rightness."

Communication is like a dance. One leads and the other follows. These roles change in the course of a discussion, but if both individuals want to lead; there is no flow or harmony. The best communicator is a great listener. If you want to discover something about another person, learn to listen and be 100% present. Be still and allow the moments of silence to take you both deeper. You can't be jumping around in your mind. That is not listening! That is faking listening. You have to be present and attentive. Try it; show up with your friends, loved ones and business partners. Give 100% of your attention and allow them to speak and use the moments of silence to drop deeper into a subject. If you really listen, you will hear more than what is being said. You will be surprised to find that people tell you more than they expected. Your quiet and loving presence will draw them out.

Years ago I was on a United Airlines flight returning from Hawaii. We were in the landing pattern coming into LAX. We had only a couple of minutes to touchdown. I was sitting

on the aisle seat. A flight attendant came over and started talking to me. Within a moment she was crying and sharing a very personal story about her father who had just died. With one minute left to land, she resumed her role as a flight attendant.

### **Self Realization**

Our true nature or true Self exists within, but we typically live on the surface of ourselves in our minds, emotions, and bodies. These are aspects of who we are, but they are limited. There is more!

Yogic practices of breath control and meditation open a deeper level of realization. This inner realm has a vast terrain of peace, joy and wisdom. This realm cannot be accessed from the mind, body or emotions, which actually limit our perception and the realization of this deeper reality.

It takes some work and dedication to learn to still the body, quiet the emotions, and move beyond the mind. Exercise is good but only takes us so far. Emotional catharsis is helpful but only drains off emotion, it does not transmute it.

Our true nature is less physical and requires different methods and techniques to access it. It is not mental. It is consciousness. Consciousness is beyond the mind and the brain. Nor is it our emotional experience. Consciousness has more sublime feelings that are known more by the mystics than the emotionally reactive.

### **Consciousness**

Consciousness is energy. A life force known as Prana, Shakti, or Chi. It is a subtle force that

is awakened and realized through the breath, which redirects the flow of this energy.

Modern physics examines the nature of the physical world, and research has shown that everything is essentially energy. Thought is energy as well and what we think is tangible on these more subtle levels. We live in an interconnected world of energy/consciousness. What we think and the nature of our inner life (our energy and consciousness) is expressed by our very Being.

*The nature of our Being becomes more important than what we do! Being is more important than Doing. Do less and Be more!*

What a paradox. This is the road-map to move from ego consciousness to higher levels of spiritual awareness.

As I said before, it does take work and discipline to learn to be still. There are techniques and methods that will help you to achieve this inner stillness. Usually, it does not happen on its own.

### **On Spiritual Practice**

Spiritual practice is designed to transform us — to transmute our life force energy and internalize our awareness into the spine and higher centers of the brain. These breathing and meditative practices withdraw the life force energy away from the outer aspects of ourselves (mind, body, and emotions) to a deeper nature that is very peaceful, joyful and wise. Our deeper nature is accessed by redirecting the life force energy into the spine and the higher centers of the brain.

There are a variety of meditation techniques to choose from. Zen practices and Mindful Meditation focuses upon the breath and awareness of thoughts. These are useful techniques. Kriya Yoga moves beyond simple awareness and works with the life force energy in the spine. It has been a very powerful method for me.

I had been practicing mindful meditation for about six years. When I first began practicing Kriya Yoga, I was amazed at the difference: each day as the quality of my breath changed and deepened, my life changed.

***Everyday I could see the transformation in my life as my capacity to move more within increased.***

Identification with our outer nature separates us. Our beliefs are different, our bodies are different, and we have different feelings about many things. We fight, argue, and kill each other over our differences and sacred beliefs about what is right and how life should be. We have little common ground because we are separated and isolated from each other. The mind separate us, the heart unites us!

Silence opens a doorway to our expanded potential where we have the capacity to heal ourselves, heal others, and function with greater intellect, wisdom and creativity. In the realms of silence we can perceive beyond the surface delusion of material reality and experience a reality that is nurturing to our soul and respectful of our planet.

Material success does not bring satisfaction for more than a moment. The minute we satisfy one desire we move on to another. Real fulfillment is found when the soul is awakened and we commune with the love and power of the universe and our Divine Creator. Striving for worldly success becomes empty and unfulfilling. We gain lots of stuff but still feel a degree of emptiness within.

I remember when I bought my first house. I was elated and felt very fulfilled. This lasted for about one minute. Suddenly I was aware that I was the same. Nothing had changed except that I now owned a home.

When we go deeper into the silence, however, we can find a new source of fulfillment that makes us whole and opens a new level of creativity and inspiration which guides our actions.

Many fear that being still will lead to inaction and inertia. However, we don't cease to act or function. In fact, we do act, but from a deeper place of realization and clarity that is in harmony with creation.

We develop an ability to perceive each moment from a higher, more expanded perspective that goes beyond our personal beliefs and self-interests. When we live in this state, we feel more connected to all life and so it becomes more difficult to kill something or someone. Compassion and acceptance result from this deeper state of oneness and our aggressive tendencies are reduced when we cease to see others as separate from our Self.

## **On Peace**

World peace will only result when individuals transform themselves and move beyond their egotistical desires for power and control.

*Love comes from the heart — hate comes from the mind and emotions.*

When enough people wake up and realize a different reality, then war will become a poor choice. When enough people live in a conscious state, then that energy will touch the majority. It is the eternal struggle of light and dark. It is an individual choice to live in light or darkness. It is a personal struggle to transform the darkness within and access the expanded states of higher awareness. Not everyone is interested and willing to do the work. Are you?

## **On Knowing**

Inner stillness results in greater wisdom. There are different levels of knowledge:

1. That which is learned by the intellect through study.
2. That which is learned by direct experience.
3. That which is learned through intuition or direct knowing.

### **1. Knowledge through Study**

A common way to gain knowledge is to get a formal education, read books, listen to lectures, and learn from others. We fill the mind with information collected and passed down through the ages. It is very possible to have gained a vast degree of intellectual knowledge, but to be devoid of any real experience or personal wisdom. Book learning is highly valued in our culture, but being able to regurgitate memorized

information is a far cry from wisdom and does little to inspire and transform others, nor does it promote any real depth of realization. One can learn more from an hour of deep silence and inner revelation than from reading 100 books!

After my original “enlightenment experience,” I found that I received a depth of wisdom when I looked inward. I spent several hours each evening looking within and asking questions. The answers came as images and thought transmissions. This inner teaching continued for two years. I finally understood mystical teachings that had previously been a total mystery and source of confusion.

A recent phenomenon in the last few years is knowledge based upon belief. People hold on to their convictions because they believe something, regardless of facts or scientific evidence. They are too rigid to consider other ideas, facts, or alternatives. This is the height of ignorance and fostered by egotism, arrogance, fear, and denial.

### **2. Knowledge through Direct Experience**

You can read or hear that fire is hot, but cannot really know what that means until you place your hand into the fire. Then, real knowledge appears.

*Direct experience makes learning cellular and lasts a lifetime.*

How do we obtain real direct experience? We must allow ourselves to open to the moment, be vulnerable and receptive to something new. If we choose to close our minds, defend our

beliefs, and rigidly hold onto our perceptions as the only reality, then new learning cannot occur and growth slips away. How can we experience anything new if we believe we already know everything and are afraid to question our beliefs? In that case, perception becomes reality. There is no potential for development when our inner state is cluttered and we are identified with our mind rather than actual experience.

***Inner silence dissolves our limitations and expands our horizons; the expansion of consciousness will unfold without effort as we learn to be still, trust, and let go.***

### **3. Knowledge through Intuitive Knowing**

The third type of learning is from Direct Knowing or Intuition. This type of perception leads to wisdom and comes from the soul, not the ego-mind identified with the body. A higher mind exists that has more discriminative capacity and appears when consciousness is elevated. This is known as *buddhi* in yogic philosophy.

We must remember that the ancient mystics as well as now modern scientists have discovered that everything is energy. When we are still within, our inner vision or knowing is awakened.

***In our stillness, we become more receptive to the information that is everywhere, non-localized in time or space.***

Our intuitive knowing grants us access to the mysteries of the universe, the patterns of our lives, and answers to our most simple questions and needs.

This type of intuitive knowing is not “psychic,” but merely the result of living in an awakened state that is unified with the universal field of consciousness.

Once again, inner stillness is required to separate our awareness from the identification with body, mind, and emotions. When we lose our unconscious identification with these limited aspects of self, and we expand our perception, we naturally perceive more, resulting in greater clarity and understanding.

Intuitive wisdom is more helpful because it relates to the moment. Every situation and circumstance has its own nuances. Intuition allows us to pierce the veil of ignorance and perceive underlying causes. True and lasting change and transformation requires a shift in underlying causes. Superficial knowledge and rote answers do not touch the depth of a moment. When one is able to listen, suspend judgment and preconceived ideas, then wise perception becomes possible.

***In the stillness of the mind when all movement ceases, then real knowing becomes possible.***

During the many years that I practiced as a psychologist, I learned a method to achieve clarity and deeper understanding of my patients’ difficulties. I would close my eyes, move to the center of my being where all motion ceased, and wait for information. I would simply “know” the real source of problems and solutions would present themselves; not from the mind, but from a deeper intuitive place within.

## **Transformational Potential in Silence**

The transformation of consciousness results when a shift of energy emerges. It is like a bubble of air rising from the depths of the sea. It begins as a small, tiny sphere and expands as it reaches the surface. Upon breaking the surface, it expands beyond its confined form to merge and unite with atmosphere.

Our awareness expands in a similar fashion when we allow it to emerge, expand, and unfold from our inner depths. This is a movement with its own momentum. When we stay alert, aware, and awake, we can consciously see this process unfold. This seemingly magical process unfolds within us and carries us to new terrains and dimensions. When we persevere with patience and maintain awareness, these shifts will occur. Our challenge is to prepare ourselves and learn how to embrace this natural process of awakening.

## **Silence and Social Action**

There can be a common misunderstanding that learning to be still results in inactivity, passivity, and lack of initiative. Forget this nonsense. The reality is just the opposite. Those who learn to master their inner life become more creative, more productive, and make major contributors to society.

When I was consulting in the corporate world, I observed a lot of wasted activity that resulted in profit loss. Individuals were engaged in useless, unfocused conversations and unfocused work which resulted in poor performance and productivity. Furthermore, the lack of inner realization created a corporate environment

where people felt isolated, cut off, and unsupported by their co-workers. Individuals across departments would not help each other and failed to follow through with promises and commitments.

When those employees were touched by the power of consciousness in the stillness of meditation, a major transformation occurred in the culture: People became bonded, interconnected, more interested in helping others, more focused, and an integrated part of their team. As a result, work satisfaction increased along with productivity.

Their inner stillness allowed a consciousness to awaken with all the resulting rewards: clarity, inspiration, wisdom, and enhanced perception. Those inner gifts led to better decision-making and more was accomplished in less time and effort. Instead of a bunch of people running around looking busy with low effectiveness, people were clear, focused, and productive. They worked harder for each other because they felt inwardly connected through a new type of bond. They actually cared about each other.

***Successful executives report using “quiet time” to find solutions to problems and clarity about purpose and vision.***

There is another reality about the world within. This expanded state results in more compassion and a desire to serve others. There is a presence in this stillness that is very loving. When we are embraced by this love, we somehow become part of a bigger plan. We feel the Creator

asking our help, and it is difficult to refuse. There is so much love you want to serve. In fact, most often, those who have lived in the depth of this stillness find themselves very busy helping others. They feel inspired and search out ways to volunteer, donate, help, and create ways to enhance the human experience. Paramahansa Yogananda was a great India yogi, mystic, swami, and spiritual teacher. He brought the ancient technique of Kriya Yoga here to the West. The documentary film, *Awake: Life of Yogananda* discusses his life and teachings. In that film, George Harrison of the Beatles, said that without those teachings his life would have been worthless! Did he contribute? Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple, had only one book on his iPad, *Autobiography of a Yogi*. This is Yogananda's life story. He instructed, through his will that everyone who attended his funeral be given this book. Is there any question about the contribution that Steve Jobs made to the world?

Modern spiritual practices and teachings call for a balanced life. Students and devotees are not encouraged to renounce the world and live in caves. Spiritual retreats and meditative practices are used to free oneself from the limitations of body consciousness and ego identity. There is a rhythm in this process. The inner journey provides more energy, inspiration, and clarity for one's outer worldly activity. One becomes more effective and more productive as she or he expands the depth of self-realization.

Many years ago in the 1980's the Cold War was hot and heavy. The prospect of a nuclear war with the Soviet Union seemed all too possible. Our government was demonizing the Soviets and creating the mental concept that they were subhuman.

During that time I was living in Nevada City, CA. I had benefited from a spiritual awakening a few years earlier and had left my Beverly Hills practice as a clinical psychologist to live in the country and be closer to nature. I had a small private practice in that town. I was meditating hours a day and lived in a state of peace and incredible joy. I was teaching locally and felt very nurtured by life.

One afternoon I was in deep meditation and had the following vision:

*I witnessed an atomic bomb exploding in Marysville, a town about twenty miles away from my home. From my training as a child in elementary school, being taught to dive under my desk and prepare for the total annihilation that was about to come after the blast, I knew I only had a few seconds to live.*

*I then heard a question,*

*"Have you done everything in your power to prevent this from happening?" I thought,*

*"No, very little. I have been enjoying the wonderful peace and prosperity of my life."*

*I found myself saying to this invisible voice,*

*"I am available. You can use me to help if you like."*

I later thought this would be a good experiment to see what God can do through one person. I had not funds, no organization, no plan and no contacts. Within three months I had a non-profit foundation, Projects for Planetary Peace, which engaged in citizen diplomacy missions between the US and the Soviet Union. I was on a flight to Moscow, all expenses paid, to set up my first citizen diplomacy mission. I met like-

minded individuals and we worked together for several years in this project.

My time in stillness led to great outer activity on a large scale. The further inward I turned, the greater was my contribution on the outside.

### **Action without Action**

Creativity flows from our deeper nature when we get out of the way. I love the TV show *The Voice*. We get to see great talent and fantastic coaching from some of the most talented vocal artists in America. We often hear Pharrell point out,

*You are in your mind, thinking about what you are doing. You need to let go and get into the moment.*

This is great advice for any aspect of life.

Preconceived ideas and mental anticipation take us out of the moment and negates our authenticity and creativity. The magic of life happens when we learn how to trust some deeper aspect of ourselves and let that expression unfold — no thinking, just being. This state is joyful, heart felt, and wondrous. From this state of being things emerge that are beyond our previous conceptions.

***When we learn how to get out of the way then our actions seem effortless. The result — expression become a source of inspiration and beauty.***

We all know the saying, “Beauty comes from within.” The realm of silence opens this inner world that far surpasses preconceived notions of being. We can tell when someone is stiff and “trying to do something,” versus someone who is in the moment, deeply connect to their

core self and allowing something to unfold. This state radiates through the body and one’s essential beauty is expressed. You cannot buy this beauty from the fashion counter. It is not the result of the skin, but the soul’s radiance.

### **Peak Performance in Sports**

Any accomplished athlete know that peak performance is the result of mental strength, along with technical ability. In the height of competition, your ability to maintain a positive mind set, remain optimistic, sustain focus and concentration, and recover from breakdown will determine if you win or lose. I have numerous publications regarding peak performance in golf which include in-depth discussions and methods from the yogic, meditative world.

Basic visualization techniques are enhanced when a degree of inner stillness is achieved. Negative thinking and mental distractions are reduced or eliminated when the athlete learns to be still. If you want a complete and extensive discussion of all these methods, please refer to my latest book, [\*Learning to Win\*](#).

I have discussed the power of consciousness from an individual perspective. I worked with the UCLA Women’s Golf Team and saw the profound effect on a team level as well. I asked the girls to pay attention to their thoughts about each other and hold positive thoughts and wishes for their fellow teammates. I did so because the Coach had informed me about the interpersonal conflicts that were hurting the team. They team won the next tournament and the coach was amazed. She told me that as she rode around the course watching the girls

play, something very different was happening: the girls were connected and a new feeling was present. They had a very successful season that year and the girls learned a lot more than just how to play better golf!

### **In Conclusion**

I hope I have brought some clarity about the value and importance of inner stillness. The mind says this is a waste of time. The soul knows this is the yellow brick road to mana.

Don't take my word for any of this. Test it out. Make your own experiment. Take some time to clear your calendar, even if it is only fifteen minutes a day, and make the experiment. Watch your life. The true proof is not what you experience in meditation or your preconceived ideas about the value of silence, but what happens in your life.

Most importantly, learn some techniques that are proven to work. Find someone who knows what they are doing and learn. Get a teacher. If you just sit, close your eyes and think you are going to get somewhere, you won't! Some people have spontaneous spiritual awakening, but most do not. Do the right thing and get the best techniques to you can to help you. Then your experiment has a real chance of success.

If you want help and direction, I have a variety of helpful programs for meditation and personal transformation. Please refer to my website at [www.ronmann.com](http://www.ronmann.com) for full details. If you are interested in the application of these methods and ideas to peak performance in sports, please

see my [www.ronmann.com](http://www.ronmann.com) website. You can also contact me directly at [mannr@ronmann.com](mailto:mannr@ronmann.com) to discuss your needs and goals.

Best wishes and Eternal Blessings,  
Ronald L. Mann, Ph.D.

PS: remember — Change Yourself and Change the World.

© 2016 Copyright Ronald L. Mann, Ph.D.  
All Rights Reserved