

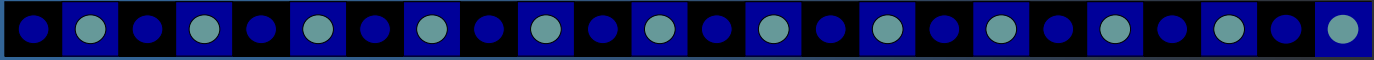
The Stillness Newsletter

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Written by just me, Renee Baker. Thanks for reading!



The Solitude of Winter

Winter time always seems to bring me to a place of stillness, more than any other season. I don't have to stop and wonder if it is summer, spring or fall. I know instinctively that the frozen ground, the snow, the cold, the bundling up, the warmth of a fireplace at home—all of this, keeps me inside and away from my neighbors and going outdoors. It is important of course to be social, but it is equally important for us to find our solitude and quiet times alone.

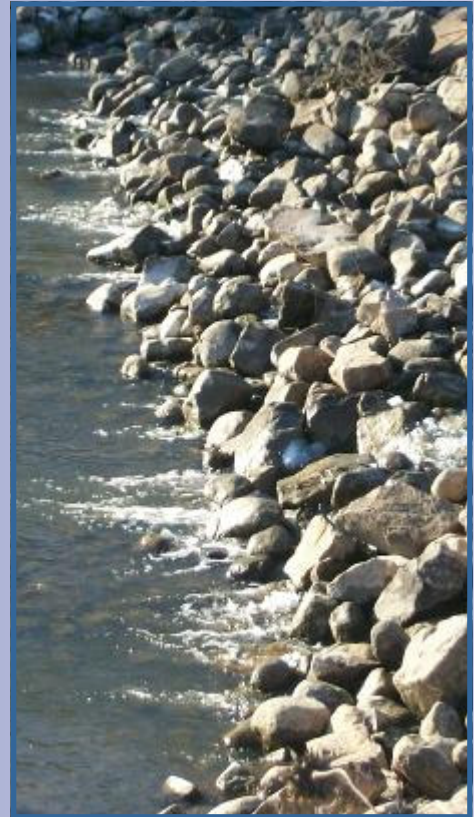
We often feel embarrassed to turn someone down for lunch or coming by for dinner, but sometimes that is what we need to do, and to also be honest about that. We need to find a balance in our lives, one of solitude and one of social interaction. It is in our solitude that we can really take time to reflect on our selves and on our lives. It gives us moments alone, to be ourselves, away from the judgment that comes from living in a world trapped in ego.

Solitude also forces us to sit with our feelings. By silencing the world around us, we are left but nothing else but ourselves. Whatever feelings and thoughts arise are our own. Until we have really spent time alone, without the television or radio on, without the internet, without any type of interaction, we really don't have a grasp of who we are. It is in our solitude, that we are forced to face our own truth. It is in our solitude, that we can really heal our hearts. We just have to be willing to sit with the shame and guilt that we have carried for so long. We have to trust that whatever feelings come up in solitude, that they are finite and will fade away, as surely as the springtime will come. Those moments of discomfort are moments of growth that we can look back on and be proud of for enduring.

Next time you have the opportunity to take some time off, consider spending it alone. Buy plenty of groceries and supplies, then stay home. Shut off the television and the radio. Turn off the stereo and sit in complete silence, perhaps do some writing or painting. It can be really hard. We get really uncomfortable in our solitude, until we get to a point, when we no longer need distraction to cover up our pain. And then, we understand what a blessing it is to find solitude for ourselves again. And even better, we will understand and appreciate the joy of connecting to life and being apart of something bigger than ourselves.



The cold of winter
 Brings me down to my knees
 Sleeping then
 After I pray
 I want to rest and cuddle
 Stay home in my bed
 Safe, secure, away from the bite
 Warm soup, hot cocoa
 Gentle flames from the fire
 Chase the tingle from my toes
 I watch the flames
 Dance with magic
 I lose myself in their glow
 Watching, staring
 Hours pass and I add more wood
 The dance goes on
 The glow teases me
 We dance on together
 Staying warm, you and I
 Until we become One
 Then I awake
 With a smile, knowing the gift
 You gave me with our dance



Cat Massage

I like to gently ease into my days, not rushing into the flutter of day-to-day activity. When I awaken, I start off with a simple wiggle of my toes, a twist of my ankles, a reach with my left leg, then my right, until I slowly awaken the sluggish egg whites that fill my body. I creep out of bed and make it to the living room, calling out to my kitty cat to come join me on the couch. I grab the homemade afghan that my former partner made for me and wait for kitty to jump in my lap. I open the book I set down from the night before, read a few pages, then push the recliner back and take another nap. My cat stretches out on my lap, enjoying his time with me. I later want to get up, but he is in such heaven too, bonding with me on this gentle way to wake up, I don't have the heart to move. So, I lay there, realizing that I'm lucky to have such a warm and loving cat that relishes his time with me. I pet him some more and give him a little kitty massage. He blesses me in return, looking up at me, stretching out and kneading his paws on me, giving me my own little, I guess human, massage. It is good to just take in these moments as they come, as gifts for our soul, for you never know when they may come again.



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