

## The Sacred Pause

A Talk Given by Tara Brach, PhD on September 30, 2015

Listen and watch: [\*The Sacred Pause\*](#)

Namaste and welcome.

I was moved by a NPR story this week that I wanted to share with you. It was about a trauma team at the University of Virginia emergency room that described having, over time, been with so many people that died, that there was a kind of numbing going on. And recently, after one of the patients died, one of the nurses just stayed for some moments. She took a pause, and she just offered her prayers. The next time it happened, the whole team stayed with her and they all paused for a few moments. Each member of the team reported feeling really touched, like that time had allowed them to sense the wholeness of that Being — that this was not just an object to be checked off the list, but a Being. They sensed a kind of sacredness to the process by taking those few moments to pause. After that, teams throughout the hospital picked it up, and now it's kind of spreading around the country, which is so wise and beautiful.

We can sense it in our bodies, that we need to be able to pause when we encounter these moments — whether it's death or birth or stress or beauty or moments with each other in a certain way — we can sense that it is in the moments of pausing that we that we really touch into kind of a natural luminosity, presence, intelligence, creativity. The pause actually creates a space for the light to comes through. I often quote the poet, Martha Postlewaite, who writes: "Create a clearing in the dense forest of your life." What an amazing line! And we all can feel it.

Pausing is really a way of reconnecting with what I sometimes call *Being-states* — the very essence-states that express who we are. At one point, the well-known pianist, Arthur Rubenstein, was asked: "How do you handle the notes as well as you do?" And I loved his response. It was really immediate and passionate. He said, "I handle the notes no better than many others. But the pauses, ahh, that's where the art resides."

So you understand, right?

The theme of our reflection together is pausing and learning to pause, and we will emphasize how we do that when we are caught in reactivity and stress. That's when we most need to pause. But really, pausing is part of the healthy rhythm of our lives.

This is from *Fire*, by Judy Brown:

What makes a fire burn  
is space between the logs,  
a breathing space.

Too much of a good thing,  
too many logs  
packed in too tight  
can douse the flames  
almost as surely  
as a pail of water would.

So building fires  
requires attention  
to the spaces in between...

...A fire  
grows  
simply because the space is there,  
with openings  
in which the flame  
that knows just how it wants to burn  
can find its way.<sup>1</sup>

This is a wisdom that can guide us in our life. If it is too packed with activity, if there is no pausing, there is not space for a universal flow of wisdom and love and creativity to move through us.

There are two related reasons – I mean, there's probably many – but two main reasons that it is really hard to pause. The first is that we are just completely habituated to activity. It is just our program. We are in a kind of *doing-trance*. You

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<sup>1</sup> Brown, J. S. (2000). Fire. In *The Sea Accepts All Rivers & Other Poems* (pp. 34-35). Alexandria, VA: Miles River Press.

know, they talk about *human doings* versus *human beings* — we are in this *doing-trance* and much of the time, we are on automatic. It is just our habit to *do*. And the second reason, totally related, is that much of that *doing* is driven by our primitive brain that is saying: *Something is wrong. I need to do something so that I am ready for what's around the corner.* Or: *Something is missing. I need to do stuff so I can make sure I get it.* We are driven by the more primitive parts of our brain, and so it is very difficult to pause because those driven *doings* at least give us a sense of controlling things. We manage threats and we go for advantages by *doing*.

Illustrative story:

An elderly Italian man lived alone. He wanted to plant his annual tomato garden, but it was difficult work because the ground was hard and his only son, Vincent, who had helped him in past years, was in prison. The man wrote a letter to his son and described the predicament. He said, “Dear Vincent, I am feeling pretty sad because it looks like I won’t be able to plant my tomato garden this year, and it has given me so much pleasure. I am just getting too old to be digging up a garden plot. I know if you were here, my troubles would be over. I know you would be happy to dig the plot for me like in the old days. Love, Papa.”

So a few days later, he gets a letter back: “Dear Pop, Don’t dig up the garden! That’s where the bodies are buried! Love, Vinny.”

At 4AM the next morning, FBI agents and the local police arrive and they dig up the entire area without finding any bodies. They apologize to the old man and leave. On the same day, he receives another letter from his son: “Dear Pop, go ahead and plant the tomatoes now. That’s the best I could do under the circumstances.”

The reality is that there are threats to avoid and advantages to go after, and we need to respond and be active in our life. The problem is that we get hooked on that. We get hooked on thinking that there is always something that we need that’s missing and there is always something that’s threatening that we are fearing. So we get locked into incessant *doing*, and there is none breathing space. Just the way a fire needs air and space to burn brightly, for our lives to burn brightly, we also need some spaces. We know it. We need to sleep in order to physically have our full health and our vitality and we need to mentally pause — to stop the incessant

narrative, the stories going on in our mind — to have a space where a deeper kind of wisdom can move through us.

The training starts with the intention to see if we can pause more, both through meditation and throughout the day. One of my friends, who is an editor with a publishing company, was working on this after reading the chapter on “the sacred pause” in *Radical Acceptance*. He described that he would go to work and that he had it certain times when he was going to pause — before starting work, after finishing an email, and so on — a few different times. But he just completely would forget, so he put up a sign. And he said that when he even remembered to look at the sign, when he would pause, he would feel this enormous push inside, this kind of anxiety and a sense that, by sitting there, he was going to miss out on something. Something was going to go wrong. He wouldn’t be ready for something. He said that it felt intolerable because, in those moments, he felt like he wasn’t in control.

Now we are talking about a twenty second pause.

This is the heart of it. The challenge in pausing is that, when we pause — and when I say pause, I mean stop goal-oriented activity, to just stop — while that creates a space for the light to move through, first it creates a space for us to feel the vulnerability that’s there. We have to be willing to feel the hum of vigilance and anxiety that is part of our organism and make peace with that, and then we find the space that life can live through. So don’t take my word for that, but deepen your commitment to pausing. Experiment and notice, when you just stop in the middle of things, the incredible push to regroup and get back into action.

There is an anxiety or restlessness in us. So, instead of pausing when we are stressed, we do the exact opposite — the primitive brain drives us into activity to defend ourselves or to grasp onto what we think we need. We end up being engaged with *doings* that cause harm and lock us into a *doing-self*. They lock us into a feeling of a self that is in trouble — deficient, separate — that needs to keep *doing*.

Before class tonight, I was meeting with a wonderful group of teachers and students from the University of Maryland in Baltimore. We were talking about this pressure to keep doing so much and touching into that belief that so many of us have that when we are not working hard, in some way, we are falling short. In some way it reflects badly on who we are. It’s deep in the culture. And of course, how when we are with each other and there is a sense of feeling threatened, rather than pausing, we

so often react aggressively. How many times have we regretted that we didn't pause rather than making a hurtful comment? We were hijacked by our limbic system and, because we didn't pause, we did something that created more distance with someone. How many times have we regretted pushing the send-button before pausing? Probably all of us. How many times we have regretted engaging in hurtful gossip? We get caught into the momentum of it and then feel a sense of shame or guilt about it. So we get caught in behaviors that, because we didn't pause and come back to our more evolved sense of being, we behave in ways we don't feel good about.

We see this also in the addictive behaviors that we get caught in. Again, because we don't pause, the urge or craving moves right into grasping, whether it is for more food or the third bowl of Ben and Jerry's, or gambling or sexual . . . whatever it is. I often quote a twelve step sponsor who said that learning the art of the sacred pause is more valuable than a year of meetings. Of course, it's not an either or — we need all of it — but it's incredibly powerful to be able to stop. And I see it in spiritual life, how we bring in our fear of not getting where we want to be and our and our desire to achieve certain mind-states and, rather than pausing and arriving right here, there is a kind of leaning forward, grasping, judging.

A Zen story:

A new student comes to the monastery and says to the Abbot, "I want to join. How long is it going to take me to be enlightened?" And you can feel the energy of it, this is not a pausing or stepping back from things.

And the Abbot says: "Ten years."

And so the student goes, "Well, what if I work twice as hard?"

And the abbot says: "Twenty years."

"Well, wait a minute! You just said ten years!" the student exclaimed.

"For you, 30 years."

We can sense it. We can sense the energy of it. I remember seeing a cartoon with of a bunch of monks at the National Mall. One monk has a megaphone and he is saying, “What do we want? Mindfulness! When do we want it? Now!”

So, again, I am describing what happens when we get kind of hijacked by the limbic system. When we don't pause, we just get carried into the behaviors. One of the places that it causes the most trouble is that, rather than pausing, we have lifestyle habits that keep us distracted and immersed in mental preoccupation and working so hard, that we are not really able to pause and be with each other. Just as we don't want to pause and feel the anxiety of the moment internally, when we pause and really are in presence with each other, it opens us to the fears about whether we will be accepted or seen in a bad light. So we don't pause with each other in that open-ended way, without an agenda. And that creates a lot of distance.

There was a report I read from the University of Michigan where they put together findings of seventy-two studies tracking the empathy in college students. They said there is a forty percent decline in empathy in college students and most of it has happened over the last fifteen years. They relate the decline to texting because when a group of students get together, rather than having a conversation and really let it go deep, at least a few of them are texting while they are talking. And it is the general understanding that often, it just does not feel safe enough to have the kind of deeper, more vulnerable conversations that lead toward empathy. And the broader comment on this is stated beautifully by Nicholas Carr in his book, “The Shallows” when he says that as long as we are hanging out in virtual reality and getting pinged and trying to track a lot of different channels at once, we don't drop in to the kind of pause that lets us really connect both with our own being, and with others.<sup>2</sup>

I do spend time really on how our inability to pause with each other and how our multitasking affects relationships because, as important as I believe it is to train ourselves to meditate on the cushion, I feel like we need training to be with each other and stay present — not to go into our habitual strategies that, in some way, are defending and hiding or judging. How do we undo that? It's radical because it means being vulnerable, but it also means opening up to the possibility of loving without holding back.

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<sup>2</sup> Carr, N. G. (2011). *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.

Pausing is a pathway — a portal to our potential in terms of full intelligence and love. A quote that I use a lot, and that I think of almost like a mantra is often attributed to Viktor Frankl: “Between the stimulus and the response there is a space, and in that space is your power and your freedom.”<sup>3</sup> And also your love and your wisdom. We need to know how to stop. Sometimes I just say to myself, “Stop.” It’s not an authoritarian kind of demand, it’s more an invitation: “Please, just stop.”

We have strong conditioning to keep going in our strategies, but we also have this capacity to pause. It’s one of the big markers in our evolutionary unfolding and it’s a central theme in the mythology of the Buddha. Some of you might remember that Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha to be, was seeking enlightenment and, before he got to the Bodhi Tree, he was seeking it in the striving of all sorts of austerities and the like. After several years of these practices, he was emaciated and sick and close to death, and he said, “There has got to be another way...”

At that point, he had a vision of when he was a child and had been brought to the annual celebration of the spring plowing and was sitting kind of under a rose apple tree watching the older men plowing away and he saw the oxen straining to pull the plow, and the cut grasses and, in the freshly overturned soil, he saw the eggs of insects and he could see the insects dying. He could see the suffering, and that opened his heart to the suffering that all Beings experience in this living dying world. In that open tenderness, he also saw the blue of the sky and the graceful soaring of the birds and the smelled the scent of the rose apple tree and he sensed joy. He was in the space of relaxing back where there was room for the ten-thousand joys and the ten-thousand sorrows, and he touched a real experience of freedom — just that open presence.

That memory basically let him know that it is an innate capacity to come home into our freedom. It doesn’t happen because we are striving really hard to get somewhere; it happens in the moments when we pause . . . when we pause all the *doings* and relax back into that *Being*-place. This is what then guided him to sit under the Bodhi Tree. This is the absolute archetypal pause, where The Buddha came to rest under the Bodhi Tree. It was *non-doing*, just full presence with what is, and, in that presence, in that space of non-doing, the light of the universe flowed

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<sup>3</sup> Vesely, F. (n.d.). VIKTOR FRANKL INSTITUT. Quote: Stimulus/Response. Retrieved September 30, 2015, from [http://www.viktorfrankl.org/e/quote\\_stimulus.html](http://www.viktorfrankl.org/e/quote_stimulus.html)

through him. He saw the reality of who he was — the radiance, the compassion, the presence that is our true nature.

I share the mythology because it is, really, in every tradition that the most radical way that we can wake up is to stop the grasping on to something else and stop the pushing away. Stop the controlling. Just stop. In that spirit, why don't we just take a pause together? We'll do a little guided pause:

You might sense that all of meditation is a pause where we are intentionally stepping out of our automatic or habitual doing. In meditation, we are discontinuing goal-oriented activity. And then, within meditation, we get lost in thoughts that are trying to get us somewhere, or figure something out or worry-thoughts, and we just keep re-waking up. We relax back into that non-doing presence.

You might sense that, with meditation, there are subtle goals like quieting the mind or relaxing the body, but they are really goals in the service of pausing and non-doing. So experiment, for this next short while, with this kind of *undoing*, this relaxing back over and over, so that no matter what comes up, you just notice it and re-relax. Relax back into the senses, the experience of right here. Relax with what you are hearing. Relax with the sensations in your body. And, in this pause, relax with whatever is true in your heart. When a thought comes up to carry you away, when you notice it, you just re-relax, just pause for a moment, and relax back again, inhabiting the pause. In a way, the practice of meditation is forgetting and getting caught in some doing, some thinking, and then remembering again and relaxing open and pausing yet again. Inhabiting the pause. Not doing anything, just being.

As you open your eyes, you might hold the consciousness of a pause as we begin to explore further: How do we pause when we are in reactivity?

Meditation builds the muscle of pausing. Over and over, we get lost in doing, recognize it, relax open and pause again . . . just arrive right here. And, along with formal meditation time on the cushion, we can practice informal pausing through the day. I hope you will, after reflecting on this, give yourself different times during the day to take a twenty second pause. It's amazing! Your whole biochemistry and perspective shifts with a twenty second pause. You might do it after you hang up the phone or after an email. Or as you are walking outside, just stop and completely drop everything and just open your senses for twenty seconds. Or while you are

conversing with a friend (if it is a person that doesn't think you are weird.) Just stop together, pause together. Or when you first sit down at your desk in the morning. I like to do it when I drive somewhere and when I arrive and stop the car, just stay for a moment before opening the door. You will find that it disrupts the trance and brings you right here. What we notice when we pause, is that we will feel a real tug to get into activity — and the trick is just to stay.

I recently saw a little cartoon with two dogs in a conversation, and one was saying: "I had my own blog for a while, but I decided to go back to just pointless, incessant barking." I thought that was cute.

The first step in learning to practice the informal pause is to be intentional, know you are stopping. Then, take three full breaths — very long in breath and very slow out breath. Right away, that starts to relax the sympathetic nervous system and help you to acclimate. And then, pay attention to waking up your senses, so you know you are here. To occupy the pause, know that you're listening to sound right here; the forms you are seeing are right here; the sensations in your body right here. Three breaths, open up your senses, and then, with kindness, invite yourself to be here. That's it. And if you practice pausing in many different situations, you will start getting the knack of homecoming.

A few examples:

I love this story of a woman who was spending the evening with her mother and her mother told her that she had breast cancer. As soon as her mother said that, of course, she felt the sadness and guilt and anger and regret and future-tripping — all like boom, boom, boom! The initial shock was really intense. Then she went into planning-mode: *What needs to happen? What are the treatment options? How soon do we get the lump removed?* Rather than pausing, she was going into control-mode. She says: "Thank God for this work, for learning how to pause and arrive because, despite the complete spiral I was in, I still had enough presence to ask that all important question: *What am I noticing right now?*

That's the beginning of a pause. Instead of the goal-oriented grasping and fearing activities, noticing *right now*. "In that moment," she says, "I was able to do something I would have missed otherwise. My mother didn't want to talk about any of these things. As I was weighing her options — whether it was a biopsy,

mastectomy, etc. — she sat on the high-top chair in my kitchen staring blankly into a cup of coffee. I was trying to be strong for her sake and mine, but it suddenly became clear — that wasn't what she needed. She was scared and needed to be scared. I debated whether to give her a hug — which sounds terrible, I know — but I was barely holding it together, scurrying around making dinner and poring over doctor's reports. Staying busy was my way of avoiding a total collapse. But being present — pausing and being present — allowed me to shift to her way. I took a breath, walked across the room, and wrapped my arms around her. It was an awkward sideways hug but it was also a long, necessary one. And then something happened. Slowly she started rocking from side to side, like a mother rocks a child, except the child was now the caretaker. It was a sweet tiny moment I'll never forget, and one that I surely would have missed were it not for the power of mindfulness.”

The blessing of a pause. This shift from being in the grip of the controlling self — which is our more familiar identity — to, in that pause, opening to inhabit loving presence — a sensitivity that can then respond to our world with some wisdom. Our whole sense of identity and how we relate to our world shifts.

In another situation, a man had a repeating nightmare. In his nightmare, he was being chased by a terrifying, shadowy, partially masked figure and he couldn't directly look at it — he felt like if he did, he would die. Each time the dream would repeat, he would just be running until he woke up in a cold sweat. As we explored it together, I suggested that, when he was in the dream, he should at least have the intention, to stop — to stop running and turn around and look, which he didn't think he could do. But actually that's what he did.

One of the times, he stopped, turned around, and looked. As he looked more closely, what he saw was a kind of caricature from the “Phantom of the Opera” — a cartoon — which actually, as a child, had totally frightened him. I can relate to that, because that was one of the scariest things to me as a child. After he took the time to stop and notice it, the cartoon figure dissolved and that was the last time he ever had that nightmare.

It is radical to pause in the times we most need pausing. One of the women in our group talked about this today before class. When we most need it is when we are most stressed. We need to stop.

Another mother-daughter story that really has always stayed with me:

A woman I was working with was talking about a stand-off she had with her mother. Her mother both terrified and enraged her and when she opened up to some kind of imagery, her mother was like a dragon breathing fire. The fire was always criticism and it went really deep. So she either avoided her mother – running from the dragon – or, when she would not be able to avoid her, she would burst out in rage that seemed really inappropriate. It was just built up.

In therapy, when she started having those feelings, we practiced pausing and being with them until, in time, she started finding she had the space for them. This is the gift of mindfulness. When we can be with what's here, then we bring clarity and kindness to it. We find there is space for it and are no longer in reactivity to it. We are larger. That shift in identity is the whole deal, because then we can respond with wisdom. She had many rounds of that in therapy, and what she most wanted was to be able, when she was in person with her mother, to pause and stay.

So it happened that when they were together over the holidays, when her mother confronted her with not having a job, and a lot of stuff got stirred up, but she didn't shrink or attack. Instead, she responded in a way that wouldn't give her mother fuel and her mother turned her attention elsewhere. But inwardly, she kept pausing and everything that was stirred up - the agitation, the sense of fear, the shame (because her mother made her ashamed of herself) – she just breathed with it. She stayed in the pause and she knew how to say "This feels horrible and I can handle it!" That's what happens when we learn to pause. We actually "get" that we can deal with it.

And, so, as she stayed with it, as had happened in therapy, space opened up — and not just space, but a real sense of tenderness. She could feel her own woundedness and sorrow, and she started being able to look at her choices with more clarity. She could stay. She could leave. She could confront her mother. She could let it slide. In that space that had opened up, she had more choices.

As it happened, she stayed. She started to be able to witness her mother because, from that pause, she had more of that kind of presence. Seeing this woman who was really ensnared in her own insecurity — her hands in fists, her words tumbling out of control — really touched a sense of compassion with her and, when they parted later

that evening, she was actually able to look her mother in the eye and touch her lightly on the arm and smile. Contact.

So, this is what I call the sacred art of pausing and it's much more challenging when we are in the midst of something with another person. I'd like to invite you just experiment right now and give you a chance to bring the pause, in a radical way, to a situation where you get stirred up. Of course, we try to practice the pause in-vivo but, the more times you've practiced on your own, the more you have the pathways in your brain and the feelings in your body that will help you when you are actually in a difficult situation. So just take a few minutes to try this . . .

We start this meditation with a pause. Not doing anything. Simply relaxing open into what is right here. You might just notice your body breathing. Let your senses be awake. And you might bring to mind a situation where you pretty regularly get caught in some level of reactivity, where you act in ways that don't express the most mature or awake part of your being. It could be something at work, at home, with a friend or family, children, partner, parents — something that involves another person. And let yourself remember that situation as if you are watching a movie so that you can hear what the other person might be saying that is provocative or see the look on their face. Sense what's going on that is really triggering you. And just pause at the key frame — right before you have reacted fully. Pause when you wish you could pause.

In that pause, as I described, go ahead and take those breaths right now. A nice full in breath, and a slow out breath. And again... And again... When you are with another person, there might not be time for this but, for now, just sense the pause. Let your senses be awake and take a moment to really pause and inhabit and experience the vulnerability or whatever is triggered in you. Rather than running away — running from the dragon or running from the vulnerability — you pause and sit down into what is here with a relaxed and gentle attention. Simply breathe with it. Just like the woman with the dragon-mother, you can sense, "Okay, this doesn't feel good, and I can be with this." You can let the space of a pause have some kindness to it, just opening to what's here with a gentle quality of attention.

And let the pause include attending to the other person. You might notice what else you perceive when you have the benefit of a pause. What else do you see about that other person when you are not in the grip of reactivity? How might that person be

caught in their vulnerability? In their insecurity? In their unmet needs? Just as this woman whose mom was diagnosed with cancer could see “She is afraid, she just needs to be with those fears,” you might sense what this person is needing or feeling.

When we really inhabit the space of a pause, the flames burn brightly. We are filled with light — we can see more, feel more, and respond to our circumstances with more awake-ness and open-heartedness. Sense, in this pause, how you might respond — how your deepest nature can come through and guide you. And you can trust, in the days and weeks to come, that even a short pause begins to give access to those Being-qualities — that deep intelligence and love and creativity that is really our nature.

As we awaken, much like building a fire, the process becomes more intuitive and spontaneous: *Oh, need to create some space! Need to stop! Need to stop figuring out because I am going in a kind of circular little trance here. Just be.*” More and more, we know when to stop to create that space that lets the light shine through. Similarly, just as we are opening to the joys and sorrows in us, we sense, with others, how to, rather than fixing them or reacting in a situation, create some space to let what needs to happen, happen.

I remember some years ago, hearing a story about a 4-year old child whose next door neighbor was a recently widowed elderly gentleman. One day, the little boy noticed the man sitting out on his porch crying and he went into his yard and climbed onto his lap and just sat there. His mother looked over and saw her son and the old man sitting together. When her child came home, she asked him what he had said to the neighbor, and his response was, “I didn’t say anything, Mommy. I just helped him to cry.”

The deepest expression of love is this non-doing presence because that’s when we are inhabiting who we really are.

Thus far, we have been exploring this on an individual level. When we create this space to pause, this life burns more brightly and the light comes through. The same process unfolds in a societal way when, rather than staying in the cycles of blame and reactivity, we can begin to step out of our agendas and our fears. When people of different skin colors, different races, different beliefs or religions or lifestyles — whatever it is — that are in conflict, that have conditioned fears and aversion,

actually pause together and deepen presence, they see past the mask and understand: *Oh, just like me, you too want to love and be loved. And just like me, you have fears that keep you pulled back.* We get to see the reality. This is what we need in the world. We need this training to pause and arrive in mindfulness and presence.

I would like to close in a very simple way and invite you again to sense: *Right here, right now, let me pause.* Just to close your eyes and to take a moment. You might have that voice inside your mind that says: *Just stop. Really stop. Come home into this Being.* You don't have to try to be aware. The awareness is what you are, and pausing is just relaxing back to inhabit it.

It is natural, even as we sit still, that the mind leaves the pause and goes into activity. And so our practice is to just notice that . . . notice and re-relax, settle back again. It's a radical thing to just have that intention to keep relaxing back, not doing anything, not controlling anything. Utterly awake, senses wide open. Utterly open, a non-doing presence.

We close with the wisdom poetry of Pablo Neruda:

Now we will count to twelve  
and we will all keep still.

For once on the face of the earth  
let's not speak in any language,  
let's stop for one second,  
and not move our arms so much.

It would be an exotic moment  
without rush, without engines.  
we would all be together  
in a sudden strangeness.

Fishermen in the cold sea  
would not harm whales  
and the man gathering salt  
would not look at his hurt hands.

Those who prepare green wars,  
wars with gas, wars with fire,  
victories with no survivors,  
would put on clean clothes  
and walk about with their brothers  
in the shade, doing nothing.

What I want should not be confused  
with total inactivity.  
Life is what it is about,  
I want no truck with death.

If we were not so single-minded  
about keeping our lives moving,  
and for once could do nothing,  
perhaps a huge silence  
might interrupt this sadness  
of never understanding ourselves  
and of threatening ourselves with death.

Perhaps the earth can teach us  
as when everything seems dead  
and later proves to be alive.

Now I'll count up to twelve  
and you keep quiet and I will go.<sup>4</sup>

Namaste and blessings...

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<sup>4</sup> Neruda, P. (2001). Keeping Quiet. In A. Reid (Trans.), *Extravagaria: A Bilingual Edition* (p. 26). New York, NY: Noonday Press. (Original work published 1958)