



EXECUTIVE VITALITY™: NOISE POLLUTION

Having just returned from a trip through some of our gorgeous National Parks—locations where one reasonably could expect some level of serenity and silence—I came away with questions like: why do some people never shut up—even outdoors? Do they think they are the only ones out there—that there are no other humans (or other beings) to disturb? Why do some people carry their radios into the woods or onto the beach, yell and scream while hiking, or never stop talking in the desert?

Don't you just need some silence sometimes? Some mental space to think, to relax, to rest, or just to be?

[A 2017 article in *Psychology Today*](#) reported on research about the benefits of silence. Some benefits are not surprising—we have all seen that we can focus better if we are not surrounded by noise, but did you know that silence has been shown to stimulate *brain growth*!?!

The harm done by noise is both physical and psychological:

In the mid-20th century, epidemiologists discovered correlations between high blood pressure and chronic noise sources like highways and airports. Later research seemed to link noise to increased rates of sleep loss, heart disease, and tinnitus. (It's this line of research that hatched the 1960s-era notion of "noise pollution," a name that implicitly refashions transitory noises as toxic and long-lasting.) [This Is Your Brain on Silence - Issue 38: Noise - Nautilus](#)

As a human being, there are two fundamental questions we can ask ourselves: how do we not interfere with others' need for silence and how do we attain it for ourselves? We actually have more control over the former (our personal piece of it, anyway) than the latter, but all is not lost there either. We can't control what anyone else is emitting, but we can control ourselves.

For example, do we need to talk loudly into our phones on public transportation or in a café? Others are really not interested in our fight with our partner or what we had for breakfast—not when they are trying to finish up work before reaching their destination, or reading the morning news, or enjoying a novel—or possibly trying to rest for a minute and contemplate their day. Not invading someone else's silent space comes down to self-awareness, being cognizant of our impact on others, realizing that, in small ways, we can choose to either make someone's day a little bit better ... or a little bit worse. Respect.

Possibly the biggest source of noise is noise we seek out ourselves—the constant distractions such as TikTok, YouTube, Netflix, Spotify, and cable TV. So many people have a need to be constantly entertained. And some people just live in a noisy metropolis. Those people can't get away from noise even if they try. If WFA (work from anywhere) is really the wave of the future, we may be able to control better where we live, since it won't be largely driven by our employer. [See Harvard Business Review article.](#)

We can choose to quiet the internal voices through meditation. We can choose to seek quietude in where we vacation, what backdrops we use to work, study or read within, what we do with our free time. Often, not always, we can choose silence over noise. The key is to recognize that our brains and bodies benefit from some amount of silence and to consciously seek it out. [10 Reasons Why Silence Really Is Golden | Psychology Today](#)

Are there "soundtracks" in your life you can quiet down? How can you better respect others' need for the silence to think, to heal, to be?