

THE SOUND OF SILENCE – REPRINTED FROM YOGA INTERNATIONAL E-ZINE

Every day—or even a couple times a week—we stop what we’re doing, roll out our yoga mat or pull out our zafu from its hiding place, and sit down. As yoga practitioners we tune out the world around us and turn in to our inner world using one of the primary tenets of yoga—[pratyahara](#) or withdrawal of the senses.

But off our mat or cushion, how much time do we spend alone, just enjoying the solitude? Probably not much. Our advice: Make that part of your daily routine. Spend time in the garden reading something that inspires you, or write in your [journal](#). “Do everything slowly,” says upstate New York-based teacher Amy Pearce-Hayden. “Even do dishes slowly,” she says, laughing.

According to Himalayan Institute’s senior yoga teacher Shari Friedrichsen, “A lot of people who study yoga think that there are good sides to themselves and bad.” But by holding space for ourselves outside of yoga-approved activities, she says, we can more readily notice, without judgment, all our everyday emotions and physical reactions—the skillful ones and not-so-skillful.

Spend some time alone and then return to your regularly scheduled yoga practice. See if it’s changed. “I notice that I’m not busy trying to unwind quite so much,” Shari says of her own personal practice. “Being alone gives you time to breathe. To know yourself a little bit better outside of just relaxation.”

If you’ve never felt comfortable hanging out by yourself, your yoga practice can actually help you transition to a more at-ease feeling. Take some tips from some of our favorite teachers:

Amy Pearce-Hayden: A yin practice can help you feel more comfortable in your own skin. It also can show you how emotions change from moment to moment. “I remain within a pose until I have an emotional change in posture,” Amy says. “Staying for 3 to 5 minutes gives me an opportunity to wait for my feelings to change.”

Shari Friedrichsen: Every time you do yoga, pay attention to your abdomen—specifically abdominal breathing, abdominal squeezes, and [agni sara](#). This will help you develop the strength and courage you need to face negative thoughts and feelings.

Anamargret Sanchez: If you don’t already have a regular meditation practice, take “little bits” of time—10 minutes, then 15 minutes—to sit still until you feel like you can sit longer. “Whenever I feel uncomfortable, my mantra meditation practice becomes my beacon,” says Sanchez. Meditation won’t always be easy—nor will being alone with our thoughts or emotions sometimes—but “as **Rod Stryker** points out, one of the things we learn on the path of yoga is courage. Tantra is all about how to be able to feel comfortable in the midst of chaos.”