

MUSIC TO OUR EARS

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One of the predominant stimuli of our lives is music. It is “found in everyday life in all societies” and is the “cornerstone of human culture.”¹ Music has a way of cultivating a community,² enhancing learning and memory,³ provoking emotions,⁴ and enriching our lives.⁵ This form of art drives us to interact intentionally with other humans, yet also intentionally reflect upon ourselves.⁶ The beat and rhythm of modern music energizes our society and exudes both innovation and inspiration.⁷ However, another kind of music has been lost with the hustle and bustle lifestyle of the 21st century: the music of silence, the natural and organic sounds of life on earth, the intentionality of reflecting under the night sky. The recovery of this kind of music is of utmost importance because it is this music that stimulates the curiosity of our minds, the meaning and vulnerability of our

¹ Laurel J. Trainor, et al, “Becoming Musically Enculturated: Effects of Music Classes for Infants on Brain and Behavior.” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1252, no. 1 (2012): 129.

² Ibid.

³ Robert Zatorre, “Music, the Food of Neuroscience?” *Nature* 434, no. 7031 (2005): 312.

⁴ Adrian C. North and David J. Hargreaves, “Liking, Arousal Potential, and the Emotions Expressed by Music.” *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* 38, no. 1 (1997): 45.

⁵ Bill Winter, “Beauty and the Beholder: A Survey of Aesthetic Experiences” *The Community College Enterprise* (Spring 2014): 62.

⁶ Joan Retallack, “The Radical Curiosity of John Cage—Is the Word ‘Music’ Music?” *Contemporary Music Review* 34, no. 5-6 (2015) 377.

⁷ Oliver Sacks, “The Power of Music.” *Brain* 129, (2006): 2528.

relationships, and the active engagement and intentionality of our lives. Therefore, the investment of silence is key to intentional listening and meaningful human interactions from storytelling to relationships to intelligence.

A common misperception about the relationship between music and intelligence is that of the Mozart effect, which states that listening to Mozart's sonatas leads to an increase of IQ, particularly when regarding spatial-temporal cognitive abilities.⁸ This effect, however, is not enduring and its influence is limited to the same day or one day after exposure to the piano sonatas.⁹ Despite the limitations of the Mozart effect, however, there are still experimentally sound hypotheses, which conclude that while Mozart's globally-renowned works are not a direct and major way of increasing intelligence, they are indeed an example of how music can have a great influence on our emotions and arousal. This impact on emotion and arousal extends to more than just classical music but to all kinds of music, which stimulate various emotional states.¹⁰

With music as a constant stimulus in the 21st-century society and always on hand, both literally and figuratively, its accessibility and convenience promote the increase in the volume of time we allow for its influence in our daily lives. While this use of technology can be very advantageous, John Cage and his composition of the 1952 piece titled 4'33" depicts the need to silence our devices and to become more aware of our environment ("John Cage Complete Works").¹¹ As a composer, he challenges our society by creating and performing on stage a melodically silent piece. This controversial performance forces the audience to listen to their surroundings and to recognize the importance of opening one's ears, for there is never truly silence. Silence does not exist to John Cage because even when there is nothing, there is always something. Silence is the ambient noises of

⁸Stephanie M. Jones, and Edward Zigler, "The Mozart Effect." *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 23, no. 3, (2002): 355.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ North et al., 45-46.

¹¹ John Cage, "John Cage Complete Works." *John Cage: An Autobiographical Statement*, johncage.org/pp/John-Cage-Work-Detail.cfm?work_ID=17.

the environment that are present, yet go unnoticed despite the specific potential of those stimuli and the “limitless field of potential discovery” of the world around us conveyed by the presence of silence.¹² In an auditorium with no musicians strategically and artfully playing their instruments, one can hear the breath of one’s neighbor, the movement of someone behind them, the air circulation in the room, the clock ticking, and even a pen dropping. Thus, a key component of Cage’s piece is the engagement of the audience. Without the prevalent stimulus of the melody of the orchestra, the audience acknowledges the other stimuli in their environment at that time and will then succumb to the “limitless beckoning to one’s curiosity.”¹³ Additionally, today in 2020, there is a 4’33” app for the iPhone, which allows people from all over the world to record the ambient sounds of their culture and their environment and then share this performance with the rest of the world.¹⁴ This global perspective of silence not only portrays how music brings people together, but also how any kind of music (instrumental, ambient, vocal, etc.) is enculturated. From a very young age, humans learn to specialize in differentiating and remembering the specific tones and rhythms that are associated with our homeland.¹⁵ Trainor points out that the music of each culture aestheticizes and expresses the social context of those people and that place.¹⁶ Humans are partial to the type of expressive art that is most common in their environment and their active participation in any form of music contributes to the improvement of the functioning of their brain.¹⁷ Therefore, music is much more than a stimulant for increasing cognition. Music is a cultural understanding and integration of human interactions and their environment.

While I agree that music is very much a dominant aspect of cultures globally and that it has an impact on our intelligence when regarding both spatial-temporal cognitive abilities as well as emotional and arousal states, there is a quality of music that even John

¹² Retallack, 377.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ “4’33’ App for iPhone™.” John Cage: Official Website, www.johncage.org/4_33.html.

¹⁵ Trainor, 129.

¹⁶ Ibid, 129-30.

¹⁷ Ibid, 130.

Cage misses in his presentation of the influential art of silence. The concept of non-existent silence and the emphasis of ambient noises and its enrichment of curiosity come close to a holistic view of music, but the essentiality of silence is its capacity to promote critical, creative, and contemplative thinking.¹⁸ This type of thinking is extremely important to our intelligence, interactions, and lives because it provokes intention in our lives and intentionality in what we do is what defines who we are on this earth and what we are bound to achieve.

Recent scholarship overlooks the true impact of silence in nature and its musicality. The need for a more organic and earthly beat and rhythm to our lives is something that the 21st century fails to see. Our attention is on the advancement of our careers and the future of our relationships and the results of our tests, so much so that “noise makers and the businesses that support them are as reluctant as smokers to give up their bad habits” of excessive distractors, thus inhibiting people of their Constitutional rights and of proper health and wellness.¹⁹ Interactions of this hustle and bustle lifestyle can be psychologically and physiologically draining. Much of our energy is devoted to our well-being and our careers, so when an aspect of life is interfering with both sleep and work production, it becomes salient in that it needs to be adjusted.²⁰ Particular health effects of the 21st-century noise pollution include hearing impairment, deficiency of spoken communication, disruption of sleep, cardiovascular issues, as well as negative effects on mental health and social behaviors.²¹ Each of these issues and their effect on the well-being of people in our communities points to the need for a turn to intentional silence. We need to move past the “inertia” and “reluctance to change” our societal norms in order to better our society as well as each individual within it.²² The call to silence could not be louder. The 21st-century society longs for reconnection with the earth and disconnection from

¹⁸ Gerald W. Bracey, “If Not Golden, Silence May Be Helpful.” *The Phi Delta Kappan* 68, No. 5 (1987): 398.

¹⁹ Lisa Goines, and Louis Hagler, “Noise Pollution: A Modern Plague.” *Southern Medical Journal* 100, no. 3 (2007): 293.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 288.

²¹ *Ibid*, 289-91.

²² *Ibid*, 293.

the mechanics and engines conspiring together to overpower the productivity and human qualities of our society. This lifestyle of booming businesses and a dedicated workforce is upbeat and energetic, yet fully capable of burning out due to these excessive stresses in our current environment. Therefore, we need silence in order to redirect our attention to where our hearts truly lie and to realign the rhythm of our lives with the earth. The music of nature has a way of connecting us with ourselves and with each other, which is something we could all use in a society where it is so easy to get lost in the masses. The music and silence of the earth epitomizes the importance of the individual. It is this individuality and personal connection to our environment and society that is essential for understanding oneself so that one can better and more intellectually and intentionally comprehend the world.

Silence re-defined for the 21st-century society means silencing technology and the to-do lists and the constant thoughts running through our minds. As John Cage states, it is never truly silent.²³ Even if we seclude ourselves from the hustle and bustle of the American lifestyle, there is a constant stream of consciousness, a constant need for background music, noise or voices to offset and ignore the vulnerability of the silence. This continuity of background stimuli is a “manmade plague of environmental noise from which there is virtually no escape.”²⁴ Everywhere we go there is noise and while the beat and rhythm of our favorite songs provide a sense of home and comfort, this constant and overpowering stimuli denies us of our “Constitutionally guaranteed right of domestic tranquility.”²⁵ This pollution originally had good intentions in that certain sounds promote certain moods for each individual person and hence enhance their state of learning,²⁶ but the noise of this century has become so domineering that it has transformed from productive to destructive. There is also a feeling of missing out on an event or forgetting to do a task or needing to be working on a project, but in reality, some of the most productive times in terms of quality of life are when people

²³ Cage.

²⁴ Goines et al., 287.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ North et al., 50.

unplug, decompress, and explore the great outdoors.²⁷ It is during these times of silence that humans are able to reconnect with the world our lives thrive upon. The straining city lights, the blue lights of screens, the never-ending background noise, the buzz of iPhones and Apple watches overwhelm our nervous and sensory systems and lead to many aversive effects.²⁸ There is so much information that enters our brains to be organized, but we have been encultured to neglect the natural and organic stimuli in order to hone in on the new, innovative, and technologically transformative stimuli. This selective attention, while normally advantageous, is detrimental because we have prioritized incorrectly. As modern day humans, our “passive perceptual selection” and “active cognitive control” prioritize living in the 21st century and minimize the interference of distractors such as the environment, other organisms, and the outdoors as a whole.²⁹ In this capacity, our internal sensory and cognitive mechanisms have led us to misconceive which features of our lives are salient and which are irrelevant. This focus on life of the 21st century, its booming businesses, the exponential growth of the internet and of the human population narrows our brain’s capacity to engage with our tried and true environment as well as hinders its capacity to think outside of the box and to reflect on who we are and how what we do changes the earth we live on and not just the people we live with. This pollution of distractors and distorted selective attention of the 21st century has caused the unique and natural sounds of the place humans have called home for millions of years to decrease in salience to the point of hardly noticeable background noise and has even induced aversive psychological and physiological effects. Thus, the vast majority of modern people neglect this necessary aspect of our intelligence: silence that focuses on the earthly sounds of Mother Nature.

The facet of intelligence that the 21st century pushes aside is that of contemplation and the importance of silence as a catalyst for creative innovations and eye-opening perspectives. Our involvements

²⁷ Winter, 62-63.

²⁸ Goines et al., 289-91.

²⁹ Nilli Lavie, et al, “Load Theory of Selective Attention and Cognitive Control.” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 133, no. 3 (2004): 351.

and passions say so much more about who we are as people than the numbers correlated with our so-called “intelligence.” The only way to dive deep into our passions is to reflect upon that which drives us each and every day to keep going. We need to devote time to opening our ears to the earthly environment because while neither our minds nor music can ever truly be silent, the redirection of our attention to more natural music and contemplative consciousness promotes a better sense of self as well as more meaningful and intentional experiences.

Presence with the earth is now more important than ever in developing a better understanding and awareness of the foundation of simple bodily and mental systems in addition to enhancing the cognitive abilities of the mind. Turning to silence as a form of social advocacy will do much more than limit the adversities of noise pollution,³⁰ for it will also encourage people to go outdoors where one can be present, reflect, and imagine without the overstimulation of the 21st-century lifestyle. This kind of presence emphasizes that these moments of silence transform our thinking, encourage creativity, provoke advocacy, and will, in the end, be the ones that matter most. These experiences are when we find who we truly are because it is here that we are defamiliarized and, hence, activated to feel what our hearts beat for and to hear what our minds think. This engagement with earthly silence and enhancement of being present is intelligence.

This interaction with the sacred silence and music of nature is crucial to the development of our wisdom because it enhances both our sensory and cognitive abilities. These moments of vulnerability change the trajectory of our lives. Listening to the sound of the wind among the trees, the birds chirping in the morning, the rain against the crisp leaves, the thunder rumbling across the soft earth, and the tranquility of the night sky creates a time in space for our minds to intentionally wander. This time of contemplation and imagination emphasizes being present in the moment. This is not like silent meditation in which the goal is to maintain attentive focus to the one particular task of breathing and to ignore all stimuli in the

³⁰ Goines et al., 293.

environment and not let the mind wander.³¹ This presence is rather an active engagement and interaction with one's surroundings in a very intentional and welcoming way. It allows for wandering of the mind, but pays close attention to the meaning of the wandering and recognizes the importance of these topics in regards to personal life, personal passions, and personal motivation.

Music acts as a stimulant for meaningful human interactions as well as emotions³² and as a distraction from individual awareness of the beauty of the earth and all that it ignites within us in order to influence our intelligence;³³ therefore, the balance of each kind is key to maximizing our wisdom and achieving our full potential. The search for truth, the acquiring of knowledge, and the bettering of ourselves cannot be entirely expressed through the Mozart effect and its successes or failures, but rather a combination of the culture of classical music and its influence on modern music as well as 21st-century interactions and the importance of intentionally listening to conversational voices and the inspirational sounds of life on earth.

This integration of the music of nature and sacred silence in our lives will contribute greatly to intentional listening because it will aide us in enhancing our ability to hear, to engage, and to be. Through our experiences with silence, we will be more prepared to remain silent and to actively listen when someone else is speaking. We will be more comfortable with the silences of an interaction because they need not all be awkward nor all be filled. Silence will enhance the capacity of our ears and the capacity of our minds which will enable us to have a broader, more open, yet intentional perspective. This open perspective is foundational to the betterment of our relationships as well as our intelligence. Not only is solitary reflection key to the simulation of our minds, but it is also key to the stimulation of relationships in that it provides an understanding of the importance of silence as a space for vulnerability and storytelling.

³¹ Jesus Montero-Marin, et al, "Psychological Effects of a 1-Month Meditation Retreat on Experienced Meditators: The Role of Non-Attachment." *Frontiers in Psychology* 7 (2016): 1935. PMC. Web, 2.

³² Sacks, 2528-9.

³³ Goines et al., 287.

Music is said to lead our brains to predicting the future,³⁴ but the beauty of silence is precisely that it does not. Silence requires one to focus on what they're currently hearing because they do not know the next stimuli they will perceive, so they must remain engaged even as a member of the audience. Much like storytelling, classical music and the music of the outdoors have a sense of predictability, yet also curiosity and active participation. In each of these experiences, one must be fully engaged, intentionally listening, and critically thinking about the form of art one is hearing and the meaning it is portraying. Performing art such as this necessitates audience attention and participation because in vulnerable and meaningful experiences, the environment relies on humans with active and functioning ears to not only hear, but to purposefully listen.³⁵

This purpose of being heard and understood can be seen in advocacy through storytelling. Silence today is viewed as something that is not consent, for consent in the 21st century is defined as "the presence of a yes...rather than the presence of a no."³⁶ And it is true, silence is not consent for unwanted actions, but, on the other hand, it is consent for conversation. The tranquility and openness of the sound of nature is an opportunity to learn something new, hear something new, engage in something new, and think something new. The sound of society in its hustle and bustle and its biased views and its regimented mainstream ways influences our thoughts more than we tend to acknowledge; therefore, silencing the sound of society is often necessary in order to give time and space to authentic, moral, and

³⁴ Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis, "Surprise and Listening Ahead: Analytic Engagements with Musical Tendencies." *Music Theory Spectrum* 29, No. 2 (2007): 197.

³⁵ Renee Edwards, "Listening and Message Interpretation." *International Journal of Listening* 25, no. 1-2 (2011): 47.

³⁶ Annika M. Johnson and Stephanie M. Hoover, "The Potential of Sexual Consent Interventions on College Campuses: A Literature Review on the Barriers to Establishing Affirmative Sexual Consent." *PURE Insights* 4, no. 5 (2015) 1.

vulnerable conversations,³⁷ or as Horace said “favor me with silence.”³⁸ Our “hearing mechanisms are always ‘on,’” but if we limit the undesirable pollutant sounds of our society, we can better appreciate the power of the ears and their great potential for productivity rather than disruptiveness.³⁹ Instead of being overwhelmed by the constant stimuli of the 21st century, the music of nature creates a better environment for listening. With nearly half of our communication time expressed through listening, the ears and our hearing mechanisms are vital components that should be protected and prioritized.⁴⁰ This prominent power of listening is significant because not only does it influences what we learn, but also who we become and what we believe. For example, the Me Too movement against sexual harassment and assault began in October of 2017⁴¹ when people started to speak up and tell their story. They broke the nonconsensual silence of society, yet embraced the silence of their listeners as an opportunity to tell their story in order to inform others of the truth. They reoriented the perspective of the audience to see the need for both storytellers and listeners in forming and maintaining a community that allows for “free discussion about these things” because this kind of community is “likely to reduce the prospects of harassment.”⁴² Along with the Me Too movement, the importance of storytelling is exemplified through authors such as Julia Alvarez who use their works to educate and advocate for

³⁷ Kleio Akrivou, “The Sound of Silence – A Space for Morality? The Role of Solitude for Ethical Decision Making.” *Journal of Business Ethics* 102 (2011): 119.

³⁸ Goines et al., 288.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Carine M. Feyten, “The Power of Listening Ability: An Overlooked Dimension in Language Acquisition.” *The Modern Language Journal* 75, no. 2 (1991): 174.

⁴¹ Bun-Hee Lee, “#Me Too Movement; It Is Time That We All Act and Participate in Transformation.” *Psychiatry Investigation* 15, no. 5 (2018): 433.

⁴² Stephanie Francis Ward, “Times Up: As the Me Too movement continues to shed light on sexual harassment and assault, sparking changes in various industries, the legal and judicial systems have been slow to adapt.” *ABA Journal* 104, no. 6 (2018): 50.

problems in underdeveloped countries such as the Dominican Republic. She is a proactive supporter of the statement “stories have power” and uses her writing as a way to “[get] the pebble out of [her] shoe.”⁴³ This pebble is what provokes activism through writing stories for Alvarez, yet without active listeners these stories would never be meaningful. Therefore, the sound of nature and the openness of silence promote healthy environments that allow for open discussion of difficult and sensitive topics. It is these moments and these experiences that will define who we are because as Winston Churchill once said “courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.”⁴⁴

In addition to storytelling, we value being present through experiences such as sharing a meal with others and stargazing. These experiences each have their own way of tuning into the sounds of conversational voices and earthly music. “The practice of welcoming in strangers and offering them food, shelter, and companionship” is continually a valued part of every culture.⁴⁵ The intimacy of sharing stories and food with one another is incomparable to nearly any other face to face interaction. Sitting around the table for dinner is when “people encounter the other and literally familiarize that encounter through shared meals.”⁴⁶ The table is where people listen and learn and live. It is where we build our relationships. “A significant part of people’s everyday experiences” is sharing meals with others because it is here when we find who we are, when we explore our curiosities, when we enhance our friendships, and when we fully listen and engage in the experience.⁴⁷ The indescribable silence of people eating

⁴³ Creighton University, “‘A Little Piece of Luminous Information’: Julia Alvarez Reflects on the Power of Stories to Save Us.” *Targeted News Service*, 14 September 2018.

[https://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/?verb=sr&csi=299219&sr=HEADLINE\(%27A+Little+Piece+of+Luminous+Information%27\)%2BAND%2BDATE%2BIS%2B2018,1-2](https://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/?verb=sr&csi=299219&sr=HEADLINE(%27A+Little+Piece+of+Luminous+Information%27)%2BAND%2BDATE%2BIS%2B2018,1-2).

⁴⁴ Robyn Campbell, “The Power of the Listening Ear.” *The English Journal* 100, no. 5 (2011): 169.

⁴⁵ Alice P. Julier, “Eating Together.” (Champaign, IL: U of Illinois P, 2017): 186.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 188.

the food on their plate and the rich silence of listening to others' stories, perspectives, and intellectual thoughts unites people of all backgrounds, ages, and cultures. Along with social hospitality and intimate dinners, we share this same appreciation for quality experiences in other aspects of life as well. In a study of urban college students, "96% of females and 94% of males claimed that they had experienced something beautiful in their lives" and that this experience greatly contributed to the quality of their lives.⁴⁸ Such experiences that were associated with the greatest "depth of experience" included listening to music and those involving natural environments such as sunsets, beaches, lakes, and stargazing.⁴⁹ Despite the tendency for technology to encompass the majority of our days, technology is not described as an aesthetic experience, but rather "fun, relaxing, or addictive."⁵⁰ Therefore, it is important to silence technologies such as phones and video games in order to experience beauty and a better quality of life. Students in this study found "aesthetic value in nature" and exemplified their "curiosity about and acceptance of traditions and lifestyles other than their own" through the high ranking of not only stargazing and sunsets, but also traveling to other countries and cultures.⁵¹ Both this aesthetic value and curiosity call for silence. These aesthetic experiences would not be as significant without silence because the music of nature would be an undertone rather than the thought-provoking, relationship-building, intimacy-driven melody it has the capacity to be. We need silence in order to appreciate the beauty of sharing a meal with others and the beauty of the great outdoors.

This pull for stargazing and sharing dinner is due to the opportunity for silence and for the exploration of a new perspective. As a society we find value in escaping the 21st-century lifestyle in order to enrich our interactions and to form more meaningful connections with the earth and with the people we chose to actively listen to and with.⁵² Intentionally listening to the earth, to conversational and storytelling voices, and to the voice inside one's

⁴⁸ Winter, 60-62.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 60.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 63.

⁵¹ *Ibid*.

⁵² Campbell, 69.

head promotes a more meaningful rhythm of life that emphasizes the importance of deep thorough thought, communication, and action in order to best enhance the continual growth and development of relationships, intelligence, and well-being.

Silence, therefore, is an investment. It is something worth investing our time and effort into because it engages us in more meaningful interactions with the earth and with fellow humans and our own minds. Silence allows for better listening skills, which in turn “improves mutual understanding...and depth of communication.”⁵³ (Campbell 69). The foundation of significant long-term relationships is catalyzed by the activation of intentional listening through experiences of silence and the music of nature. In addition to relationships, silence’s power to promote active engagement of our ears is demonstrated in various educational and professional fields such as classrooms, managers in business, and medical doctors. Regarding the classroom, one study found that “80% of the teachers believed that listening skills are equally important across the curriculum,” so teaching strategies that implement time for students to formulate their own thoughts and ask questions about what they are learning help to promote increased concentration and focus, all of which necessitate silence.⁵⁴ On the other hand, silence is required for “honesty, mutual respect, understanding and a feeling of security in the employee” in terms of the level of listening of supervisors in the workplace.⁵⁵ Lastly, purpose and need for intentional listening is exuded in the significance of the stethoscope, which “embodies the essence of doctoring: using science and technology in concert with the human skill of listening to determine what ails a patient.”⁵⁶ Without silence, doctors’ ability to evaluate and diagnose the health of patients would be greatly hindered. Thus, this silence-derived skill of purposeful listening applies not only to conversations, relationships, and advocacy, but also to educational and professional environments. Invest in silence in order to enrich experiences of all kinds. Intentional

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 66.

⁵⁵ Madelyn Burley-Allen, “Listen Up.” *HR Magazine* 46, no. 11 (2001): 115.

⁵⁶ Howard Markel, “The Stethoscope and the Art of Listening.” *New England Journal of Medicine* 354, no. 6 (2006): 551.

listening is worth the life-long investment, for it contributes to not only the positive and active improvement of education and careers in the 21st-century, but most importantly to the happiness and well-being of people. “Listening well is the first step in developing a trusting relationship” and the sense of feeling heard and understood is key to building confidence and feeling of worth and love in individuals, especially in those who have been abused, maltreated or neglected.⁵⁷ (Merritt et al. 2070). Implementing silence and listening as an important aspect of our lives should, therefore, be our number one priority, our number one investment.

Intentionality in our lives is fundamental to striving to be the best version of ourselves. In order to live up to our potential extraordinary intelligence as creative and cognitive creatures, we need to retrain our brains to better listen to life on earth, to maximize awareness of our surroundings, and to prioritize contemplation in our lives. Turning to silence will stimulate a type of thinking key to our intellectual and interactional achievements, a better understanding of oneself and one’s individual importance as it pertains to intellectual growth and intentionality in our connections (earthly and human), and the active listening of the music of nature and the music of our hearts and minds. This stimulation and renewing of our senses, rather than the misperceived priority of the 21st-century lifestyle, will move mountains in terms of increasing our capacity to hear and to know what we’re hearing in addition to its meaning not only to our lives, but also to our earth. With this incredible capacity to intentionally listen and engage with the place that gives us life through experience with silence, we will find greater purpose, exude greater critical thinking and emotional intelligence, establish greater relationships, show greater growth of character and live with a greater appreciation for our world. Tune into the music of the outdoors, the intimacy of human interactions, and the silent tranquility of the night sky in order to appreciate the beauty of the earth and the immense intelligence of human beings as we embrace all of our world, live intentionally, and invest in silence.

⁵⁷ Darcey H. Merritt and Susan M. Snyder, “Maltreatment Type and Behaviors: Does Listening Matter?” *Child Abuse & Neglect* 38, no. 12 (2014): 2070.

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