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by
Brenda J. Young

Today's Devotional Nurture Yourself with Silence

Whether you are
a person who
loves solitude
or one who is
uncomfortable
with it, I believe
God wants all of
us to have times
of silence in our
world. After all, if
Jesus needed it,
why wouldn't we?

**"Be still and know that I am God."—
Psalm 46:10 (KJV)**

Do you ever feel like life is too busy, too noisy, too demanding and too distracting? No? Then you must be one of those people who thrive on constant busyness and socialization. I am so glad it is you and not me.

Whether you are a person who loves solitude or one who is uncomfortable with it, I believe God wants all of us to have times of silence in our world. After all, if Jesus needed it, why wouldn't we?

In Matthew 14, we find an account of Jesus sending the crowds and his disciples away and going up into the mountains alone. When I read that, I wonder if He was at a point in His life when He felt like I sometimes do, in desperate need of peace and quiet. When I don't get some solitude occasionally, I begin to feel anxious, frustrated, and in dire need of a chance to stop the world so I can get off and reconnect with the One who gives peace to my spirit.

My paternal grandmother was the mother of 13 children, 11 boys and two girls. Bless her sweet heart, how did she survive? My dad tells me that on days when her life got too chaotic she would "get away from it all" by going to the apple orchard to peel potatoes (I imagine it took a lot of potatoes to feed a family of 15!). He said if she saw one of those 13 kids coming and she wasn't ready to be bothered, she would throw her apron up over her head. And they knew they needed to back off, Grandma was a redhead!

I don't have an apple orchard or an apron, but I do have a quiet room in my house. The four preschool grandchildren, who are at my house several days a week, know which room it is and what is expected of them in that room. No TV, no playing, no noise. And believe it or not, every once in awhile, one of them will come to me and ask if they can go there, because it is "too noisy". They usually last about 30 seconds.

So why do we need those times of silence and solitude? For me, it is a time

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So why do we need those times of silence and solitude? For me, it is a time for renewal and refreshment. During those quiet times, I can remind myself of what is really important in my life and what my purpose in life is. It gives me a chance to dream and visualize what I want my life to be like. It is a time when my soul can be spiritually nourished. At the end of my quiet time, I usually feel peaceful and confident that I can handle whatever life throws at me.

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So what if you don't have a quiet room, an apple orchard or even a mountain to go to like Jesus did? You might be that young stressed mom, who can't even go to the bathroom in peace, or a midlife woman, who is needed to be a constant caregiver. I honestly believe you, too, can find your quiet place. If you are like me, you HAVE to find it. At first, it may be just a few seconds at a time when you can close your eyes and "be still."

But as you come to realize how it benefits your life, you will give it to yourself everyday, as a gift. You will make it a priority in your life. You will learn to discipline yourself to do it, because you have come to find that the rewards of doing it are so great!

Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know that I am.

Be still and know.

Be still.

Be.

To share your thoughts on this article, email writers@frontporchpublishing.com.

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by Janet Hitchcock

Relax & Meditate Your Stress Away

Life is stressful. Do I have enough time/money/energy to do all the things that need done? Home, job, kids, parents, grandkids, spouse, friends, church, etc. all need something from me. What do I do first? How do I get it all done? When is there time for me? Oh, help! I'm stressed out! Sound familiar? Relax. Now is the time for You. If you don't take time to take care of yourself, how can you possibly take care of all those other demands? Block off some time on your calendar—fill in one hour twice a week with "Me," working your way up to once a day. The rest will fall into place once you find peace inside. So how to begin? Begin with a breath. Sit up straight, feet on the floor, hands in your lap. Draw a deep, slow breath in through your nose, and slowly blow it out through your mouth. Do it again...and again. Can you feel some of the tension releasing? Now as you breathe in, breathe in peace; as you exhale, blow out stress. Picture yourself in a peaceful place, perhaps under a shady tree beside a flowing stream. Feel the breeze wisp across your face. Listen to the songbird courting his mate. Watch the butterflies flit among the wildflowers growing along the bank. And breathe. Breathe in peace, breathe out stress. Stay in that place, relax, feel the stress leaving your body. If your mind starts to dwell on all the things you ought to be doing, give each "thing" wings, let them become butterflies dancing in the breeze. When you are refreshed, picture yourself slowly rising and walking along the stream, back into your day. Feel better? Ready to take on the next task? Good!

Life is stressful. Do I have enough time/money/energy to do all the things that need done? Home, job, kids, parents, grandkids, spouse, friends, church, etc. all need something from me. What do I do first? How do I get it all done? When is there time for me? Oh, help! I'm stressed out!

Sound familiar?

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What you have just done is a form of meditation. While there are many types of meditation, all of them have their roots in ancient spiritual practices. Meditative techniques have been used by Eastern religions and cultures for thousands of years. Western religions have adapted the techniques to their own spiritual beliefs. Today, these same techniques are used outside the religious arena for health and well-being.

According to the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, most types of meditation have four elements in common:

A quiet location.

Meditation is usually practiced in a quiet place with as few distractions as possible.

A specific, comfortable posture.

Depending on the type being practiced, meditation can be done while sitting, lying down, standing, walking or in other positions.

A focus of attention. Focusing one's attention is usually a part of meditation.

An open attitude. Having an open attitude during meditation means letting distractions come and go naturally without judging them. When the attention goes to distracting or wandering thoughts they are not suppressed; instead, the meditator gently brings attention back to the focus.

When I am stressed out, I find that meditating on scripture helps relax and refresh me. As I practice my breathing, I read a passage, and breathe it into my center, letting go of the stress as I exhale. I focus on whatever word or phrase resonates with me. Then I merely sit with that word or phrase and listen. Sometimes, it turns to prayer; sometimes, it turns to action. But always, it's "me time".

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- Abraham Lincoln



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by
Georgia Kohart

Hope. Help. Healing.

Sara's Garden in Wauseon

"Sara's Garden has given us something that no one else has... Hope. What a blessing Sara's Garden has been to our family. We're so grateful to the entire staff for all of their care and support."

"Sometimes in tragedy we find our life's purpose."— Robert Brault

Although maternal death in the United States is extremely rare, it does occur. In 2002, the unthinkable happened. After a traumatic delivery of her son Jackson, Sara Rychener Burkholder died at the Fulton County Health Center in Wauseon. While still reeling from the loss and grief of losing a wife, daughter, and mother, her family was confronted with the news that during the delivery Jackson suffered a lack of oxygen, which resulted in cerebral palsy. Rather than shocking the family into inaction, they banded together to seek the best possible treatment for Jackson, so he could reach his full potential.

The Rychener and Burkholder families' extensive research revealed two alternative treatments that they felt would benefit Jackson—Hyperbaric Oxygen Treatment (HBOT) and Conductive Education (CE). Hyperbaric literally means "increased pressure." HBOT introduces 100% oxygen to tissues to help increase healing. It is in use in other parts of the world and helps patients suffering from cerebral palsy, Parkinson's, diabetic wounds, stroke, migraines, seizures, sports injuries, traumatic brain injury, autism, and ALS or Lou Gehrig's Disease.

On the way to discovering help for Jackson, the Rychener and Burkholder families met many others, who were on the same path for a loved one and who were facing physical, emotional, and financial strain. As a result of this discovery, in May of 2004, Sara's Garden, a non-profit Hyperbaric Oxygen treatment facility was established in Wauseon. The first clients received treatment in 2005, and that summer the Conductive Education services arm was also opened.

HBOT is an inexpensive treatment option but one that is not widely accepted in the American medical community. "It

(HBOT) is a molecular science and we are a chemical country. The rest of the world treats with molecular science," explained Matt Rychener, Sara's brother and Development Director of Sara's Garden.

The success of HBOT is based upon the body's need for oxygen to heal tissue. While typical room oxygen levels (what we breathe) is around 20%, through controlled pressure, HBOT increases that level to 100%. At the higher pressure, more oxygen is forced into the tissue. The benefits of oxygen, delivered under pressure, were discovered by physicians working with naval divers with the bends, caused by rising to the surface too quickly.

HBOT is delivered in large tanks, called chambers. Each person wears a clear, lightweight hood through which the oxygen is delivered. The pressure in the tank is gradually increased. Sara's Garden now has two hyperbaric chambers. The original was donated by the United States Navy and seats five clients and staff. The newest was constructed to Sara's Garden's specifications. Installed in 2010, it seats 10. Clients are able to talk, watch videos, play games, read or listen to music while in the hyperbaric chamber. It is also wheelchair accessible.

The three full-time staff, 10 part-time staff, and board members include board-certified physicians, certified nurse specialists, emergency medical technicians, trained hyperbaric technicians, and other experienced professionals.

"Choosing HBOT is a very individual decision," Rychener says. "Everyone is different; it depends on the injury or condition. A standard round of 'dives,' as we call them is around 40. People come back if they see improvement. We treat pre- and post-operatively and see hundreds of kids with cerebral palsy. We have amazing success stories on our web site."

Among the testimonials of families



Sara Jo Rychener Burkholder



In front of the hyperbaric chamber are Sara's family members—Chamber Operator Julie Rychener, Clinic Director Judy Burkholder, and Development Director Matt Rychener.

helped by the Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy at Sara's Garden are—

"My son was diagnosed with Autism at the age of 2. It was a very difficult time for our family. However, we were determined to fight Autism. We set out on a journey and are so blessed that we found Sara's Garden along the way. We have been to Sara's Garden for 80 dives now and are seeing wonderful results. He is talking more, expressing feelings, eating new foods, and making connections with peers and adults. Academically he is at or above grade level and is currently in a regular education classroom with support from the Resource Room when needed. We were so lucky that the staff at Sara's Garden were so committed to helping us along the way, as they are truly wonderful guides and cheerleaders!"

"Two years ago I was diagnosed with



Sara's Garden now has two hyperbaric chambers. The original was donated by the United States Navy and seats five clients and staff. The newest was installed in 2010 to Sara's Garden's specifications.

a disease called RSD after I broke my arm. We tried lots of things to make it better because I was in pain all the time. We kind of lost hope because everything was making it worse... but once we found Sara's Garden the Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy helped tremendously and it

"Sara's Garden has given us something that no one else has... Hope. What a blessing Sara's Garden has been to our family. We're so grateful to the entire staff for all of their care and support."



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Continued from pg. 9

was an amazing experience."

"My 3 year old daughter has Cerebral Palsy as a result of brain damage from Meningitis that she contracted when she was 2 weeks old. Up until this past summer she was pretty much like a new born baby. We had to hold her head up. She pretty much laid around and was not interested in playing or in toys. Once we started coming here to Sara's Garden it's like the Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy just opened up a new world for her. She's more alert. She recognizes everyone in our family and her receptive language now is the same as a typical 3 year old."

"Sara's Garden has given us something that no one else has...Hope. What a blessing Sara's Garden has been to our family. We're so grateful to the entire staff for all of their care and support."

Despite the fact that neither HBOT or CE are covered by most private medical insurance, Medicare or Medicaid, Sara's Garden is dedicated to making treatment available to those facing financial limitations. The fee for each session is \$110, far below the actual cost of treatment. Sara's Garden is presently the only non-profit hyperbaric treatment center in the country and one of only two that offer HBOT and CE. The organization is financially supported by tax-deductible donations.

"News about us is mostly by word of mouth," Rychener says. "And we are really excited about our sponsorship program. The donor can rest assured that 100% of the donation goes to help the person you want to help."

Hope. Help. Healing. These are the three words that Sara's family and the staff at Sara's Garden live by!

For more information on Sara's Garden, log onto www.sarasgarden.org or call 419-335-SARA. To share your thoughts on this article, email writers@frontporchpublishing.com. (Photos courtesy of Cindy Baden & sarasgarden.org).

National Conductive Education Day

February 23, 2012



Across North America, there are literally millions of children and adults who could be learning how to become more mobile, independent and self-confident with a dynamic learning system called Conductive Education.

Developed over 60 years ago in Hungary by Dr. András Pető, Conductive Education (CE) maximizes the independence and mobility of children and adults, affected by stroke, cerebral palsy, developmental coordination disorder, multiple sclerosis, acquired brain injuries, Parkinson's, and spina bifida.

CE operates on the core belief of neuroplasticity—the lifelong ability of the brain to reorganize neural pathways and on the premise that no matter how severe the disability, people can learn and improve when they are motivated.

Conductive Education can help individuals to—

- Improve their ability to initiate, isolate, and coordinate movement
- Learn problem solving skills and techniques to increase independence and mobility
- Increase confidence in a variety of positions
- Improve gross and fine motor skills
- Improve self-help skills, concentration, communication, and motivation
- Increase awareness of body position
- Improve weight bearing and transference of weight

Conductive Education is widely accepted and practiced, with proven success in Europe. It is also integrated into the community rehabilitation and educational systems in Hungary, Israel, Germany, and Great Britain. Sara's Garden is one of only two facilities in the country offering both Conductive Education and Hyperbaric Treatment.

A Conductive Education Program includes a structured and consistent daily routine, which allows individuals to become comfortable and learn faster. It generally focuses on the development of gross and fine

motor skills, balance, coordination, and self-care skills (toilet training, self-feeding, hand-washing), all while working toward cognitive, social, emotional, and speech/language development.

Among the testimonials of families helped by Conductive Education at Sara's Garden are—

“My son's spastic cerebral palsy caused him to be a non-walker with limited communication skills prior to attending Sara's Garden. We followed all recommendations from the traditional medical community, however our medical insurance put significant limits on the prescribed physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy. At best, these therapies worked to maintain his current levels but not advance his skills. Sara's Garden provides a cost-effective therapeutic alternative to provide intensive learning on a regular basis that my son finds to be enjoyable and motivating. He took his first independent steps after participating in Conductive Education for less than six months. My son has continued with his Conductive Education for over four years. Through Conductive Education, he has grown in physical strength and stamina. His vocabulary has grown by several hundred words. I highly recommend Conductive Education at Sara's Garden.

“Before attending Conductive Education our son was standing on his own. However, after his first week he was walking with the aid of a walker, climbing stairs, and participating in small group activities. He continues to improve with the skills our family gained from his being part of this holistic therapy program. His confidence in his body and its movement improved immensely. We appreciate the time and dedication the staff of Sara's Garden gave to our child.”

For more information on Conductive Education, log onto sarasgarden.org or call Kasey Church at 419-335-7272 ext. 206. To share your thoughts on this article, email writers@frontporchpublishing.com.



Across North America, there are literally millions of children and adults who could be learning how to become more mobile, independent and self-confident with a dynamic learning system called Conductive Education.



(Photos courtesy of Cindy Baden & sarasgarden.org)



by
Kate Murphy
(Hicksville 8th Grader)

From My Family to Yours Chocolate Lovers Month

“Chemically speaking, chocolate really is the world’s perfect food.”—Michael Levine

“Chemically speaking, chocolate really is the world’s perfect food.”—Michael Levine

Bold Brazen Brownies

Brownies—3/4 c. unsweetened cocoa powder, 1/2 t. baking soda, 2/3 c. melted butter, 1/2 c. boiling water, 2 c. sugar, 2 eggs—beaten, 1 T. vanilla, 1-1/3 c. flour, 1 c. dark chocolate chips.



Raspberry Coulis & Garnishes—4 c. thawed raspberries, 1/3 c. powdered sugar, 2 c. fresh raspberries, whipped cream, chocolate syrup drizzle.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9”x9” baking dish. In a large bowl, stir together the cocoa, baking soda, and half of the melted butter. Add the boiling water, and stir until the mixture is smooth. Add the sugar, eggs, remaining butter, and vanilla. Whisk until smooth. Add the flour,

stirring until thoroughly combined. Stir in the chocolate chips, and pour mixture into the prepared baking dish. Bake for 40-45 minutes or until set

but still moist in the center. A toothpick poked into the middle of the dish should be covered with chocolate. In a blender or food processor, combine the thawed raspberries and sugar. Blend until completely smooth. Using a fine sieve, push the raspberry sauce through the holes to remove the seeds. Set aside. To assemble, spoon some raspberry coulis onto each serving plate. Top with a cut brownie. Add whipped cream. Drizzle with chocolate syrup, and garnish with fresh raspberries. Serve immediately.

Terrific Tiramisu Treat

12 egg yolks,
1/2 c. sugar, 2 lbs. mascarpone cheese (at room temperature), 1 box ladyfingers,
1 pot strong coffee,
2 T. vanilla, 1 lrg. chunk dark chocolate.



Make a strong pot of coffee, and let it chill completely. Whip egg yolks and sugar with an electric mixer until fluffy. Fold in the mascarpone cheese or use the electric mixer on low.

Let the mixture set up in the fridge for about 30 minutes. Pour cold coffee and vanilla in a mixing bowl. In a 6”x9” baking dish, spread a thin layer of the mascarpone cream mixture. Dip the ladyfingers into the coffee and layer onto the cream until covered. With a cheese grater, shave the chocolate on top. Repeat until the dish is full to the top. Serve immediately or keep chilled in the refrigerator.

To share your thoughts on these recipes, email writers@frontporchpublishing.com.

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Enjoy a Cup of Herbal Tea!



by
Georgia Kohart

Early spring weather can be raw, cold and damp—the perfect time to enjoy a hot cup of freshly brewed herbal tea. Fortunately, herbs are some of the first plants to come back to life in spring. Many people use their fresh garden herbs in cooking and baking, why not use them for tasty and restorative herbal teas?

Packaged herbal teas are also readily available in markets and grocery stores, especially since tea rooms and shops devoted to the art of tea drinking have rapidly increased in popularity. Some tea drinkers prefer the body and flavor of a hearty black tea base that is flavored with herbs. Earl Grey Tea is notable for its signature flavor of bergamot, a colorful, easy to grow herb. The fragrance and flavor found in lemon balm, lemon verbena, chamomile, mint, and a variety of other herbs lend themselves to iced and hot teas. Some herbs are flavorful enough to stand alone in tea while others add a nice note to traditional green and black teas.

Long purported to induce restful sleep, chamomile tea has a slight sour apple flavor that pairs nicely with honey. Tea, infused with mint, is believed to be an aid to digestion and to have a calming effect.

Be sure to rinse your tea pot with hot water before filling with ingredients and boiling water. Both of the following

recipes call for fresh mint leaves, but tea bags may be substituted.

Fresh Mint Tea

4 bags black, green or white tea, 15 large spearmint or peppermint leaves—gently rinsed and patted dry, 4 c. boiling water

Steep the above ingredients until mixture cools to room temperature. Remove tea bags and mint leaves and add—lemon and orange juice, sugar to your liking, and 4 c. water. For hot tea, add boiling water and serve in tea cups with an orange slice. For iced tea, add cold water and serve over ice in tall glasses. Garnish with a mint sprig.

Settler's Punch

The inspiration for this recipe came from a Marshaus Berry Farm Herb Fair with the surprise ingredients of rosemary and sage.

5 T. whole spearmint, peppermint or apple mint leaves, 1 T. fresh rosemary leaves, 1 T. sage leaves, 4 black or green tea bags

Bring one quart water to a boil and pour over the herbs. Steep 10 minutes. Remove herb leaves and tea bags. Pour herb tea into a large pitcher and add—1 small can frozen lemonade concentrate and 1 c. sugar. Add 1 gallon water and serve either hot or cold with lemon slices studded with whole cloves.

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by
Nan Kuhlman

Benefits of Massage Therapy

Studies at the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami have shown that the benefits of massage are more powerful and long-lasting, if utilized on a regular basis.

Few people would disagree that massage can provide comfort and relaxation. But how many are aware that massage can actually be used therapeutically to remedy chronic problems such as high blood pressure and carpal tunnel syndrome, along with speeding recovery after surgery?

Research has shown that massage can reduce hypertension, perhaps because it stimulates pressure receptors that bring about action from the vagus nerve, which regulates blood pressure. One such study by the University of South Florida in 2005 showed that hypertension patients, who received ten massages of ten minutes each over a three-week period, showed noteworthy progress in reducing their blood pressure when compared with a control group, who rested in a similar environment.

Neuromuscular therapist Carrie Radzik, owner of Defiance Therapeutic Massage & Wellness Center, has seen cases where therapeutic massage has provided help for hypertension. In one case, Radzik reports that a patient with high blood pressure was able to stop taking medication after a six-month period of massage treatment.

Radzik administered clinical massage to a patient, who was ready to have surgery for her carpal tunnel pain. After a series of treatments, she responded so well that she did not have to have the surgery. Radzik also reports that other patients with frozen or painful joints have seen great improvement in their range of motion as a result of massage treatment.

If surgery ends up being necessary, massage can be beneficial both before and after any procedure. Radzik recommends massage to prepare the body for surgery, both mentally and physically. Before surgery, massage can help reduce stress

and relax the muscle tissue, and after surgery, it can reduce swelling, decrease recovery time, and minimize scar tissue. Radzik has performed massage on patients following hysterectomies, mastectomies, and other surgeries, all with positive outcomes.

The effects of massage are cumulative, which means that the more often you get a massage, the longer the benefits will last. For chronic or persistent issues, regularly scheduled treatments might be necessary to resolve the situation. Studies at the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami have shown that the benefits of massage are more powerful and long-lasting, if utilized on a regular basis.

It is important to have a therapist with the proper training and credentials, particularly if you are suffering from a persistent problem. Radzik says, "The public doesn't realize there are specialties in the massage world, and they don't really know what kind of training their massage therapist has." Finding out a massage therapist's credentials can help ensure a more successful outcome.

The public is becoming more educated and interested in clinical massage, recognizing its value in treating chronic disease. Even physicians, chiropractors, and dentists are referring patients to massage therapists as an alternative healing method.

Massage has been a noninvasive healing tool for centuries. Western research is now showing that there are surprising benefits to massage, which may help cure or comfort those who suffer from some of the most common chronic problems like high blood pressure and carpal tunnel syndrome.

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