

# Finding Stillness: Resting at Home in the Middle of Chaos

There's a part of us that wants to find peace from all the chaos in our lives, all the busyness and distractions and complication and stress and overwhelmingness of it all.

We want to get away from it all, or get control of everything and create order out of the mess. We want stillness, we want rest, we want peace.

But this kind of banishment of chaos and stress isn't usually possible, unless you go into the mountains and live in a monastery. (Spoiler: You'll find chaos there too.) So what can we do?

**The answer is to find stillness and peace in the middle of chaos.**

This is an advanced practice, and so if you're new to meditation, I suggest starting with my beginner tips for mindfulness and then move on to my short ebook, *the Zen Habits Beginner's Guide to Mindfulness*. But if you've meditated a bit, you'll have the foundational skills for stillness in chaos practice.

In this post, I'm going to share a practice of resting at home, and then talk about how to use that in the middle of the chaos of our lives.

## **Resting at Home Meditation**

Try this now, if you're somewhere where you can sit in quiet (even on a train or bus) for a minute or two:

1. Sit still, ideally in a position where you feel stable and grounded.
2. First check in with your body — how does it feel right now? What sensations can you notice? Is your posture upright and relaxed? What kind of energy are you feeling in this moment? What does it feel like to be alive right now?
3. Then check in with your breath — is your breathing relaxed? How does this breath feel? What is the texture of this breath? Keep your attention on the breath for a few moments.
4. Next, expand your awareness to everything in the room, including yourself. Not anything in particular, just a general open awareness of everything, eyes open, taking in all sensations, receiving them, not labeling them. Don't judge anything, don't fix on anything in particular, just open yourself to awareness of a field of sensations, your own body included in that field, not separate from anything.
5. In any of these steps, if your mind starts to wander to thoughts, just notice that (without judgment) and gently come back to your awareness of the present moment.

If you can rest in this open awareness, coming back when you wander ... what can happen is that you yourself can drop away. Not your body or your awareness, but your *conception of yourself*. We all have this idea of ourselves, a structure we've created that is "me," but in truth it's just a mental concept. With an open awareness, this conception can drop away. Try it for a minute or two, and see if you can let that mental concept of yourself drop away, so that you're just a part of everything in your awareness.

What I've found is that in the moments you can do this, it feels like you're coming home.

Think about what it's like to come home — either to your home at night, or to your childhood home after being away. It's like coming home to the familiar, to the comfortable, to a *sense of belonging*. This is where you belong, where you are loved, where you can be at rest. That's the feeling that you can get if you rest in open awareness, with your sense of self just dropping away.

Rest in this sense of coming home. Rest in this place of stillness, of connecting to the infinite.

### **Finding Stillness in Daily Chaos**

If you can get glimpses of this sense of stillness and of being at home, at peace, in the meditation above (and don't worry if you can't yet, it can take some practice) ... then you have a place to come back to at any moment.

In a moment of stress or frustration, you can pause and find this sense of stillness. In an argument with your spouse, in the snarl of commuter traffic, in the frazzle of getting through your overwhelming daily tasks ... you can rest at home, in this place of belonging.

At any moment during the day, you can access this:

1. Notice that you're stressed and feeling a sense of groundlessness, of chaos. Notice that this comes from wanting peace, stillness, control. Notice that this comes from wanting to be safe, wanting your idea of yourself to be in a safe, stable, peaceful place.
2. Find that place by resting in open awareness, in this moment. Letting go of the sense of self, just being part of everything around you. Just coming home, to where you belong, where you've belonged all along.
3. Find a sense of love for everything in your awareness, a sense of compassion for the parts that are in pain (yourself included, but also for others), a feeling of friendliness to everything in your awareness, a feeling of curiosity, of gentleness, of gratitude.
4. Continue to do what you need to do in this moment, going through your email, doing your daily tasks, but with a sense of stillness in the middle of the chaos, a connection to the infinite all around you, a feeling of peace as you take action.

There's no need to get away from the chaos. It's just movement, in the place where you belong.