

No sounds of silence during summertime

By Jeff Davidson

In the middle of any given Sunday in June, right when you are about to take your afternoon nap, some fool will click on his 130 decibel leaf blower and clear the yard. Why do I say fool? Because he's doing damage to his own hearing, upsetting the tranquility of the neighborhood, and not burning the calories or getting the exercise he would have had he used a rake.

The leaf blowers, cars, sirens, barking dogs, and all other noise intrusions outside of the home, when added to the TV, radio, common household appliances, and everything else that happens inside, render us unable to have a quiet moment.

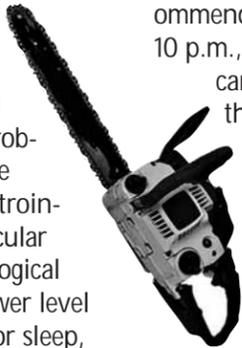
Constant exposure to unwelcome environmental noise actually increases a person's production of the stress hormone cortisol, and can lead to mental health problems. Elevated levels of noise have also been linked to gastrointestinal disorders, cardiovascular problems, and other physiological issues. Surprisingly, even lower level noise has been linked to poor sleep, aggressive behavior, and a decline in job productivity. It's time for each of us to assess the ways in which elevated levels of sound have crept or perhaps, stormed into our daily environment, and how we can regain control.



To add more free and quiet time to your life, here are simple steps you can take:

1. Rise each morning without an alarm clock. This sounds a little startling, but not nearly as startling as an alarm clock is to your system. You don't need that kind of jolt to start the day. Actually, it will take you two weeks or less to develop a routine whereby you can safely predict what time you will wake up each morning. For example, if you sleep eight hours per night, and this is recommended for adults, going to bed at 10 p.m., within a matter of days, you can consistently offer yourself the opportunity to wake up at 6 a.m. without an alarm.

2. Have some quiet time at the start of the day. Don't flip on the radio or TV or jump on the Internet soon after arising. Spend at least a few minutes in a chair quietly contemplating your day, meditating (if the spirit moves you), stretching, taking an easy stroll, or engaging in any other quiet, relaxing activity. It may seem as if you're not doing much, but giving yourself a few minutes like this



at the start of the day can help improve your entire day.

3. After you tune in to find out the latest news from whatever medium you employ, get back to focusing on your day, your family, your career, and your life. Most of us, most of the time, are powerless when it comes to changing the course of national, international, or other broad-sweeping events, but we do have control over our individual domains. Staying quiet and focused on that is likely to yield far greater satisfaction, results, and peace of mind.

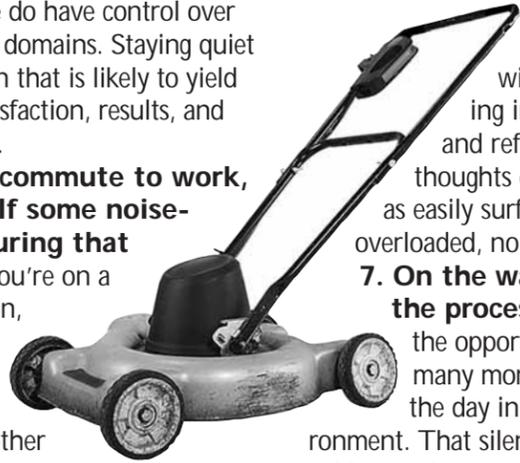
4. If you commute to work, give yourself some noise-free time during that journey. If you're on a commuter train, pick the car where people seem to be respectful of other people's need for quiet. If you're on a bus, or some other form of public transportation that is inherently noisy, consider using ear plugs. Or, if you prefer, insert your ear buds and listen to your own relaxing sounds. It could be music, poetry, or whatever you've downloaded that helps you to stay calm and focused.

5. At work, become aware of the sanctuaries you can use when you need to find a quiet space. Sanctuaries may include the

rooftop terrace, the far table in the employee lunch room, an empty conference room, a bench outside of your office building, and so forth. Your ability to silently reflect on the task at hand, in such a setting, may be your most productive time throughout the whole day.

6. At least once a week, eat lunch in silence. The one day you eat alone, you get to chew your food completely, forget about keeping up with and participating in the conversation, and reflect on some thoughts or ideas that can't as easily surface throughout the overloaded, noisy workday.

7. On the way home, repeat the process. Give yourself the opportunity to have many moments throughout the day in a noise-free environment. That silence can indeed be golden, and, in measured amounts, will help you to be more productive at work, better able to focus your attention, and better able to derive the best from yourself.



Jeff Davidson speaks about achieving work-life balance and is the author of the book series, *The 60 Second Innovator*, *The 60 Second Organizer*, and *The 60 Second Self-Starter*. Visit www.BreathingSpace.com or write to Jeff@BreathingSpace.com.

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