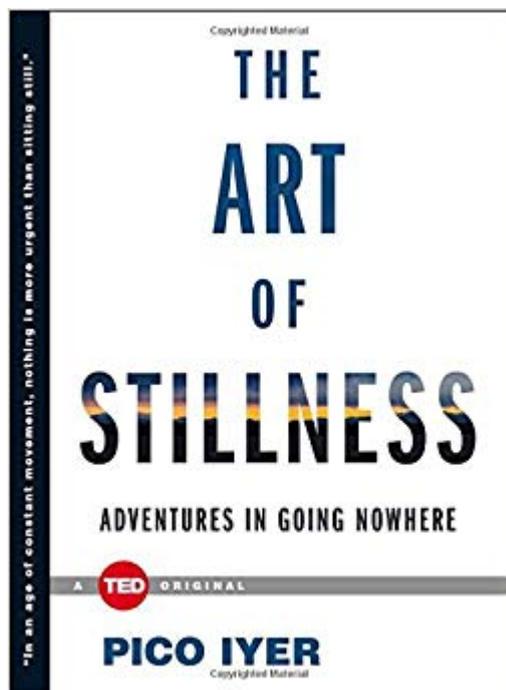


The Art of Stillness: Adventures in Going Nowhere (TED Books) by Pico Iyer



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Author: Pico Iyer

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A follow up to Pico Iyer's essay "The Joy of Quiet," *The Art of Stillness* considers the unexpected adventure of staying put and reveals a counterintuitive truth: The more ways we have to connect, the more we seem desperate to unplug. Why might a lifelong traveler like Pico Iyer, who has journeyed from Easter Island to Ethiopia, Cuba to Kathmandu, think that sitting quietly in a room might be the ultimate adventure? Because in our madly accelerating world, our lives are crowded, chaotic and noisy. There's never been a greater need to slow down, tune out and give ourselves permission to be still. In *The Art of Stillness*—a TED Books release—Iyer investigate the lives of people who have made a life seeking stillness: from Matthieu Ricard, a Frenchman with a PhD in molecular biology who left a promising scientific career to become a Tibetan monk, to revered singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen, who traded the pleasures of the senses for several years of living the near-silent life of meditation as a Zen monk. Iyer also draws on his own experiences as a travel writer to explore why advances in technology are making us more likely to retreat. He reflects that this is perhaps the reason why many people—even those with no religious commitment—seem to be turning to yoga, or meditation, or seeking silent retreats. These aren't New Age fads so much as ways to rediscover the wisdom of an earlier age. Growing trends like observing an "Internet Sabbath"—turning off online connections from Friday night to Monday morning—highlight how increasingly desperate many of us are to unplug and bring stillness into our lives. *The Art of Stillness* paints a picture of why so many—from Marcel Proust to Mahatma Gandhi to Emily Dickinson—have found richness in stillness. Ultimately, Iyer shows that, in this age of constant movement and connectedness, perhaps staying in one place is a more exciting prospect, and a greater necessity than ever before. In 2013, Pico Iyer gave a blockbuster TED Talk. This lyrical and inspiring book expands on a new idea, offering a way forward for all those feeling affected by the frenetic pace of our modern world.



Reviews of the **The Art of Stillness: Adventures in Going Nowhere (TED Books) by Pico Iyer**

Gunos

I have been waiting to read this book and my impatience to finally devour this book was rewarded by having to wait longer than I wanted. Reading the book reminded me that my impatience is not the answer that I need.

This book is powerful. It is short and simple to read. The idea of stillness makes sense and does not require much thought to process. However, to implement or rather have it be part of your life is challenging. That is the reason so many people need to read the book and think it through about how to adjust life so this is part of the 24 hours.

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"The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another." William James

This quote resonated with me because it really makes stress seem to easy to get rid of. In the end stress does not actually exist unless we choose to allow that thought to permeate our mind.

"Heaven is the place where you think of nowhere else."

Wow! Once again I thought about how many times have I been somewhere, doing something, being engaged but really my mind is elsewhere thinking about this or that? This happens all the time. When I coach my 8th grade basketball team I always tell them that while at practice only think practice because there is nothing else you can actually do so you might as well make the best of it. We need to remind ourselves of this. How do we stay in the moment. When we are at one with the experience of NOW we are happy. Just last night I was at a concert and instead of recording for the future I just let the moment be. This is what I love about live music! Music keeps me in the moment and my brain thinks of nothing else but the lyrics and music. The question becomes how do we do this with the mundane elements of life?

"It is only when you stop moving that you can be moved in some far deeper way"

I am taking December to live this statement. We are so busy as people. We rush from here to there and never really stop and take in the moment. I have a problem with this and am working to make sure 2015 is not the year for movement, but stillness. Decluttering our "busy" lives of the things that we think are essential, but really just keep us from those moments of stillness. We don't always have

to be doing something to be productive and often times all the business keeps us from being as productive as we can be.

"The way of contemplation is not even a way and if one follows it, what he finds is nothing." Thomas Merton

This is key for me. This idea cannot be something that I check off my to do list. It cannot be one more thing to do. As John Kabat-Zinn stated on 60 minutes if it becomes one more thing just don't do it. The key is to restructure your life to just having this happen naturally because it is how you live. That is the paradox of reading books like this and trying to live the ideas.

Coiwield

When I recount my trip to Corsica to others, I don't usually tell them about the one day that my husband and I literally didn't go anywhere and ate nothing more than a loaf of bread because we had used the day's budget to pay for an expensive cab fare the night before. This day was a significant turning point for me because it was when I realized that just being in my life at that moment was more important to seeing all the beauty that was around me. It was a private moment until now because reading Iyer's book "The Art of Stillness" did a beautiful job at celebrating the art of doing nothing. From an enviable globetrotter and travel writing, this made a big impression.

While my husband has tried to teach me how to appreciate silence and slow down for years, it has been hard to rewire my busy over-achieving self to see value and not laziness or time wasted. Not to discredit my husband's efforts, but there is a real magic to Iyer's style of writing that got to me deeply. He is such a gifted writer that his book slows down your reading pace. I feel much more prepared to savor things like the zen poetry of Rengetsu: Life and Poetry of Lotus Moon or the art of calligraphy. While Iyer declines to consider himself a master of stillness, he brings in the stories of those that have inspired him most, like a French scientist who becomes a monk and Leonard Cohen who quieted his musical career to pursue silent meditation as a Zen monk for several years.

If you are interested in slowing down... meditation... and told you just need to sit still and do nothing, this is a perfect book for you. It elevates the practice without exploiting or preaching it. By the end you will realize that this is a topic that this world Needs to hear!

Gri

I just finished reading the Art of Stillness; Adventures in Going Nowhere by Pico Iyer. What a stimulating yet calming and thoughtful book. The book is filled with insights both philosophical and scientific regarding the wisdom of taking time to slow down and celebrate one's own Sabbath. Iyer offers beautifully that not only will it be good for us but also we the reader will get more done, and done well, if we make time for stillness.

The Book is filled with great characters and quotes. Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz offers: " If I ever go looking for my heart's desire again, I won't look any further than my own backyard. Because if it isn't there, I never really lost it to begin with." And the musician Leonard Cohen " Sitting still as a way of falling in love with the world and everything in it" ... And Iyer himself say's "... talking about stillness is really a way of talking about clarity and sanity and the joys that endure. "

Accompanying this book and as a supplement to it is a Ted Talk , Here is link to Iyer's 15 minute Ted Talk http://www.ted.com/talks/pico_iyer_the_art_of_stillness?language=en

I heartily recommend feasting on this book about stillness, and unexpected pleasures ... and enjoy the advice of a travel writer who provides an invitation to the adventure of going nowhere. In an age of distraction, nothing can feel more luxurious than paying attention. And in an age of constant movement, nothing is more urgent than sitting still.

I give it 5 Stars... And heartily recommend it as a simple pleasure.

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