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Quiet!

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Quiet!

We might be amused at the incongruity of someone yelling, as loudly as possible: "Quiet!" But I remember using the word, with considerable volume, to try to bring some measure of quiet to a class of some 30 or 40 high school Sophomore males who were considerably less than attentive to my attempts at teaching them about Euclidian Geometry. Sometimes we have to make clear, conscious efforts to achieve a moment of quiet in the environment external to us, or more importantly, within our own minds.

We want a few moments of quiet to put the constant flow of events into perspective, but often hear within us, "you can't stop now," or, "You have to keep moving." Though the voice is familiar, and the words in our heads are in our own language, we probably do not freely choose to direct the message to ourselves. We do well to ask ourselves whether the tone of voice and the words seem friendly and helpful or pushy and stress-inducing. If the former, we might accept them as somehow appropriate to the moment. But if the inner words are recognized as expressions we do not want to speak to anyone else, then why should we accede to their unreasonable demands? If we keep running from one task to the next without a break, we grow less satisfied and less efficient.

If a mean-spirited person was constantly urging us to work, work, work, and never to pause, we would learn to turn aside from the negative pressure and pursue a healthy, honest pace of activity; we would take some necessary internal moments of quiet. Since we are not enemies to ourselves, and if we notice some negative, pushy remarks in our minds, we can choose to slow down for a few moments, rather than move immediately to the next task. No one is going to give us the quiet time we need. With honesty and integrity we have to take it - for the sake of the work, as well as for us, the workers.

How do we realistically find or make some quiet time? First by making the conscious decision that we must make a change in our habitual behavior. Wishing or thinking will achieve nothing; only a firm decision that we must have some regular pauses – however invisible they might be to those around us – will bring us to take some action. When we decide to have some quiet time, we will find ways to incorporate refreshing pauses in our busy schedules.

We usually find time to see a doctor, or take care of a sick child, making needed arrangements to allow for something we consider necessary. If we recognize that our mental and emotional attitudes are valuable to us and to those around us, we will make the necessary arrangements so that we can become quiet enough to put our internal house in order. We, and those with whom we live and work, need not only to complete various important tasks, but also to fulfill our purpose as humans. Even computers have to have "idle times" to check internal processes. We are much more complex than computers, and we need at times to check with ourselves how we are doing whatever we are doing. When we take some quiet time, our work efficiency improves as well as our satisfaction with what we are doing.

We have to be firm, not with a group of high school Sophomores, but with the voices inside our heads. For the sake of our sanity and well-being as well as our contribution to the "psychic ecology" around us, we need some time to ourselves. If, in planning our moments of quiet, some fear of what others will think enters our minds, count it as one of the more active and unruly "Sophomores," and, without yelling, insist: "Quiet!"