

The Paradox: Do nothing to restore your sense of well-being

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Do nothing for a day. Clean your head to create space for clarity, creativity, and as a side effect, you may also reduce your carbon footprint, at least for this day of nothingness. Our modern urban hectic lifestyles often push us to our limits. If being ceaselessly active and productive makes you feel good, keeps your life in balance (which is highly unlikely since hyperactivity drains energy according to the rules of physics) and does not harm or deprive the people around you (harmonious relationships make us happier), keep going. Otherwise, if you sense that you are losing your track and a life purpose masks itself in a hazy distance, keep reading as you probably need grounding, at least, a bit.



Imagine a train speeding in front of you and you are running after it, in vain, attempting to reach

happiness or success, either of these desires being transferred inside the train's wagons. Now, you feel like you are losing the strength to run, you cannot accelerate anymore.

You might think that, it is time to stop, and perhaps wait for the next train and hope it will match your own ability to run alongside it and board anytime. Yet, this is the train of life and the tracks are setting its direction, so now you must think thoroughly about 'How do I catch my real, happy life, the train with a certain destination?'

Here are the solutions that you need to start with:

First of all, you must learn how to be consciously here, aware of [NOW](#).

Assess your state of consciousness.

What are you not aware of? The sounds, smells, physical things, taste, your thoughts...

What did you choose to focus on instead?

Why?



Recently, I stayed at a countryside [ryokan](#), which is a traditional Japanese inn where calm, reflection, connection to nature, ourselves and the terrestrial human existence resurface from the overcrowded inner space of our modern psyche. While dipping deep into the hot spring bath daily, the steam purified my skin as well as my thinking. A genuine, thorough and meaningful sense of spiritual bliss suddenly descended from the surrounding forest upon my mind. I realised that ...

Sometimes by doing nothing we achieve more than by vigour and planned activity. The ropes of anxiety suddenly loosen up and we are freed to do and embrace what is truly important and fulfilling. We regain the sense of well-being.

Additionally, we learn more about ourselves by going deep, not just by floating on the surface of the ocean, but by diving in to discover the immense potential existing in its waters. For such an enlightening experience we need to reserve time, though. Being or making ourselves looking constantly busy is like a disease that rarely benefits an individual and the people around.



Millenia of knowledge and experience in support of slowing down

Many leading world's religions grasped the millennial wisdom of the crucial impact of an

individual's relaxed state on our and our societies well-being by reserving one day of the week for rest. Christians have Sundays, Jews sabbath, Muslims Fridays, ... To be with your loved ones and with yourself. The doors to your inner world of thoughts, desires and .. are open. By going to the church, one creates a meaningful silent conversation between him/herself and the divine. Nonbelievers or the less committed followers of any faith need to create an adaptation of self-reflection and a labor-free day in order to be in peace with oneself and the world.

Aside of religions, many cultures have established social acceptance of nothingness.

Far niente, the Italians are known to employ the sweet secret of enjoying the moment in their lifestyles. Guilt-free and nonchalant. Across the border, the French paradox may not just dwell in imbibing bottles of wine and devouring bricks of foie gras, but in their enviable two-hour lunch break and a space reserved for hobbies and family activities.

No rush, calm down your stress hormones, soften the heartbeat and install awareness of a communal existence. The long-living people of the blue zones, that I wrote about in my [first musing](#) , do not seem to rush anywhere. Their pace of living is manageable while they find satisfaction in their humble surroundings - from Okinawa through Sardinia to the laidback Costa Ricans in Central America, centenaries are not out of ordinary.

The Eastern philosophies, so popular in the fatigued modern West, all highlight nothingness as the path to well-being. From the Tao in China through Zen in Japan to the Buddhist concepts of Thailand, inertia is praised over intervention with nature's status quo.



Sophisticated ancient wisdom applied to today's life

The essence of zen is to blend in within the landscape (our surroundings), which also means adhering to an "original state". That may well mean that by excessive activity and change we divert ourselves too much from our original state and our content place in the world. This can skew tremendously the balance scale of existence as we know it. Yin and yang still curl into the modern beings' consciousness as the ultimate answers to a satisfied life.

By reflecting upon oneself and emptying the mind as happens during a meditation and a mindful observation, not just spiritual questioning but also our true, untapped wisdom awaken.

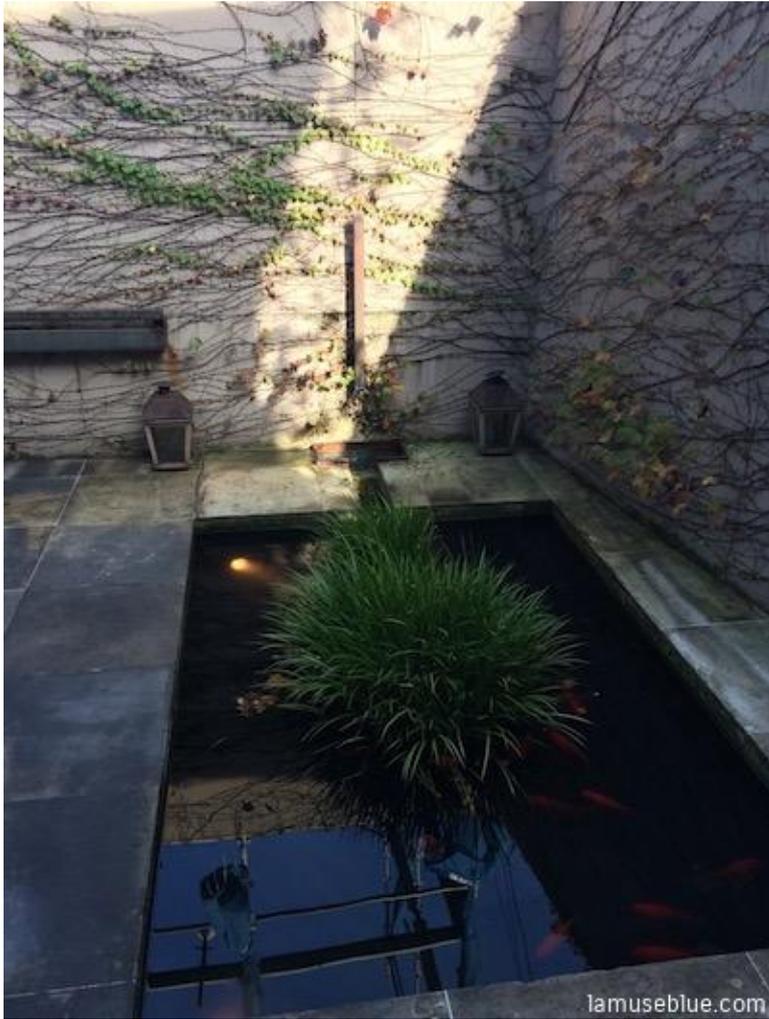
On your day of nothingness, you flow, like a warm summer breeze, smoothly through the waves of hours, no commitments. If you encounter any setbacks then the following grounders can help.

Tea drinking in its natural simplicity and slow motion can facilitate the entrance inside one's self.

So do walking, hiking or swimming in nature. In a busy city, one needs a calm area.

Emptiness, simple design and spare floral or plant decoration can become helpful triggers to rest

the flickering mind.





Architecture which has strong zen spirit should create a "pause" for the passers-by in the modern hectic environment. Xi Wen Tai, a Taiwanese architect and lecturer, took the concept of the Buddhist "Three doors" into his creation of contemporary temple in the commercial zone of the city of Taichung. The building captured the three phrases in Buddhism that stand for wisdom, compassion and relief which are also the three doors to escaping from worldly worries. A simple addition of a fish pond in front of a restaurant or creating an airy and spacious entrance lobby in a building also have power to relief our human sorrows if just for the moment. Art wields immense power over our minds, so we can use it to tune into the nothingness of the day.

Stopping and experiencing our surroundings, the view from the window, the freshness of the air streaming through our lungs, the texture of skin, softness of the chair. Exploring our sensations teaches us as much as a good book.

If you still crave outer knowledge, then research any topic that really interests you. No cheating, work or ticking offs on your must-do-lists are off the "no schedule" day. Instead, indulge in pursuing your genuine interests.

On the day of nothingness, think about your placement on the Earth, your connections and

interactions with nature and the world at large. Is your lifestyle sustainable? Are you being too selfish? What about your children or the future generations? Perhaps, only loving parents can understand this concern, but if you connect with your environment, you will too.



Good for our planet, good for us

As the **climate** talks in Paris this month finally reached the binding commitment of mutual responsibility for our planet, each of us can contribute to our common wellbeing by incorporating a day of nothingness into our weekly schedules. No cars, planes, cooking on heat, meat and processed foods, chemical cosmetics, and above all, perhaps surprisingly, no shopping. Indeed, buying new garments and gadgets which we do not need but rather just want, pollutes our world in a sneaky manner. Apparel production, constant release of the upgraded hardware and marketing to buying new things constantly, without needing them, adds scars to our dirty environmental destruction (footprint). More stuff also pollutes our mind. Having too much to choose from, busies us with vanity.

Living green is also better for our health. Sparing our lungs from harmful particles in the air is only one step, cleaning up our waters is also necessary, but the industrialised world went way too far

before knowing how much harm had been done. In what we believe that nourishes and improves our wellness may, as it seems to be turning out, do us more damage than good.

In a recent opinion piece of the International New York Times, Nicholas Kristof, pointed at the danger of multiple unregulated chemicals in our daily lives that are now being proved to harm us. These endocrine disrupting artificial substances were linked to altering healthy reproduction, affecting diabetes and various cancers. Reportedly, Your clothes, cosmetics, furniture, cleaning products and even your grocery receipts are tainted by these invisible killers! Now, your and your family's health is in danger and you won't do much just by eating organic. This is **science**, not just naturalist movement of some hippies. Many of these studies were published in the British Medical Journal and other high-profile outlets.



As I am finishing this editorial, I am swinging in a hammock, surrounded by beach gardenias, coconut palms and curious lizards. Listening to the ocean whistling into a steady stream of water in my background, I am happily captured in this space of nothingness. I just landed in Maldives, the 800km stretch of coral reef islets in the wildness of the Indian Ocean. The situation lends itself to doing nothing.

Where can one find more peace than here in the full embrace of nature? Nature remains for all humanity the grounding medium of our inner peace. Yet, it is our mind, the strength of our thoughts that can transfer us to this Earthly paradise without being physically present. Most of us cannot escape the urban factory of hyperactivity, we should try though as it is for our own good.

More about my ayurvedic balancing retreat in the Maldives will be published here soon.