

A Moment of Calm

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MEDITATIVE AND REFLECTIVE READINGS FOR
INNER PEACE

DIANA J. ENSIGN, JD

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Book cover by Arcane Book Cover Designs. www.arcanebookcovers.com
Formatting by ebookpbook. www.ebookpbook.com
Author photo by Emmeline Ensign

Published by SpiritHawk Life Publications.
Indianapolis, IN, USA

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020920080

Ensign, Diana

Title: A Moment of Calm: meditative and reflective readings for inner peace / Diana J. Ensign—1st edition
p. cm.

ISBN: 978-0-9883320-2-7 (paperback)

1. SELF-HELP / Relaxation / Meditations / Stress Management / Personal Growth / Motivational 2. BODY, MIND, SPIRIT / Mindfulness & Meditations / Inspiration & Personal Growth / Spiritual / Essays

Printed in the United States of America

Dedication

To Earth, To Spirit, and To Each of You.

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Before each reading, please take three . . . slow . . . deep breaths.

Introduction

First, let me begin with a few words about the importance of self-care.

No matter what the current situation we face or the events taking place in our world, we need ways to nurture moments of calm in our life. Ongoing stress is harmful not only to our peace of mind, but it is also detrimental to our physical bodies. The American Heart Association, along with numerous other scientific sources, tell us that prolonged chronic stress may put people at risk for cardiovascular diseases, including high blood pressure, heart attacks, and strokes. Other physical symptoms of stress can include headaches, digestive problems, and sleep disorders. Chronic stress can also negatively affect our mental health resulting in anxiety or depression.

My intention with this book is simply to offer you the opportunity to take a few moments to relax. Perhaps weekly, set aside time for one reading. Sunday mornings, for example, could be designated as a quiet meditative period.

At the beginning of each section of this book is the reminder to take *three – slow – deep* breaths. Unlike shallow breathing, deep breathing engages the diaphragm. This type of breathing practice is also known as belly breathing or abdomen breathing. If you ever took singing lessons or yoga classes, you likely learned the benefits of diaphragmatic breathing. According to Harvard Health, breathing in this way can slow the heartbeat, lower or stabilize blood pressure, and lower stress.

If it's not possible to take three slow deep breaths because of health restrictions or due to environmental conditions, we can still practice becoming more mindful of our breathing. In Buddhism for instance, Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh taught present moment breath awareness by inviting people to mentally repeat: *"Breathing in, I know that I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know that I am breathing out."*

Another option is to replace the words *"three-slow-deep"* breaths with *"three-internally-relaxed"* breaths. We can visualize the interior of our body as containing an

imaginary river that flows through our veins. With calm awareness, we can then gradually slow this current down and, thereby, relax internally.

Throughout this book, try exploring ways to relax that work best for you.

If you have followed my blog "*Spirituality for Daily Living*" over the past decade or so, you may recognize some of these readings first published there. I hope that all of my writings have contributed to our collective wellbeing. I am a firm believer that as we gain more awareness of our inner states, we become more skillful at being the peace we wish to bring into the world.

And so we begin . . .

Place your hand over your heart. Feel your heart beating.

Close your eyes and take *three – slow – deep* breaths.

In this moment, our hearts are filled with calm and peace.

In this moment, we are well.

***In love and gratitude,
Diana J. Ensign***

Part I

Peace

Three – Slow – Deep
Breaths

~ ~ ~ Breathe ~ ~ ~

INNER CALM

Finding Peace Within

We are entering a new day. Sit quietly, listen to the sounds floating past you, and remember all who came before.

During periods of uncertainty, inner stillness brings us strength: Strength of heart, strength of mind, and strength of spirit. Calm introspection illuminates not only our interior landscape but also the astounding splendor of world around us. When we are mindful of our motives and intentions, as well as consciously aware of the natural world in which we live, we become better at releasing our fierce grip on chaotic thinking and on our futile efforts to control life.

In stillness, we don't have to know all the answers. We don't have to be right. And we don't have to prove a point. To rest in the silence of unknowing is not a sign a weakness. It means we are open, and we are ready to hear the quiet whispers of our heart.

Place your hand on your heart. Take a moment to just breathe.

Align your heart with what you truly love.

Know you are here for a reason.

Let Spirit be your guide.

Inner calm is mighty. It is the courage to get up each day despite hardships. It is the willingness to bear witness to loss, anguish, death, betrayal, and destruction. It is the capacity to hear the silence of children who speak volumes with their eyes. It is the ability to cry when tears are needed and the ability to laugh when human folly presents itself. It is the determination to hold fast to a vision that serves as a positive force, rippling out into the world in a myriad of beautiful ways.

Close your eyes for a moment and feel life's energy coursing through the center of your being, connecting you to trees, clouds, birds, caterpillars, winds, rustling leaves, and the bright moon on a still, dark night.

Surround the essence of your soul in this eternal sacred space.

As we continue the work of walking on this earth, we can ask:

What is my role? How may I serve? How do I appreciate the gifts that make up the moments of my life?

Each new day, we begin again.

AFFIRMATION: I begin this day in calm abiding peace. I quietly listen to my heart. I know my strength rests within.

Accessing Deeper Levels of Peace

At various points in our lives, we may find ourselves overwhelmed. We may be facing challenges concerning our career, romantic relationships, parenting, finances, or health. We may be caring for aging family members or mourning the death of a loved one. During such trials, serenity may seem like a far-off distant planet. We know tranquility exists, but we don't actually believe it's feasible to visit (let alone live in) a place so alien to our current situation.

In turbulent life circumstances, we might doubt inner peace is even possible.

While remote planetary travel may not yet be our reality, traveling inward to find our calm center is not only a worthwhile pursuit; it is essential to our wellbeing. It's also not as difficult as we might imagine.

What's more taxing—and extremely hazardous to our health and wellness—is the belief that excessive stress, rushing, worry, anxiety, and conflict are somehow normal. A never-ending chaotic treadmill version of normal can lead to stomach ulcers, headaches, strokes, and depression, along with a host of unhealthy coping techniques such as excessive alcohol consumption, substance misuse, cigarette smoking, overeating, and other avoidance practices. An unexamined life of incessant turmoil can carry a high mental, emotional, and physical cost.

It's important to know that although we may not be able to control everything that happens in our life, our responses do not need to be self-destructive.

By slowing down and listening to our spirit, we will understand better what is needed. We may feel grief, sorrow, sadness, and despair. Yet in quiet moments, we can also hear a soft voice reminding us: "It's Okay. Breathe. Cry. Ask for help."

The space within each of us is expansive enough to hold and cradle the complex emotions we experience. When we let the emotions flow through unobstructed, brief moments of peace eventually emerge. Life's surface activities may still swirl about us like choppy waves on the water. However, by delving deeper we discover how to be in the world—without being overwhelmed by it.

Take a step back today from a troubling situation. Allow your spirit a calm respite.

Pause. Breath in peace. Breathe out calm. Be present in this moment.

Our inner journeywork is waiting. As unbelievable as it may sound, vast starlit galaxies will be there to greet us and support us when we venture into the deeper Spirit realm of our being.

AFFIRMATION: Today, I allow all my emotions to flow through me. I am protected and guided by Spirit. I am fully present to this moment.

{End of Excerpt}