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The sound of silence

Dominique Levack explores how silence is not only be helpful to our wellbeing but especially during menopause.

Today our lives are so busy, demanding, fast paced have we forgotten what the sound of silence is like? Perhaps it can only be found in the middle of the nowhere, or in the dead of night. Silence and stillness in today's world are elusive, but according to experts vital.

“A man is ill only because he does not know how to be still. Because in stillness you are in touch with a dimension way beyond creation.”

Sadhguru

Yogi, mystic and visionary, Sadhguru suggests trying to use half the words in your day, and try to notice the difference. Become conscious of the words you say and articulate the same things you are saying with half the number.

Going from compulsiveness to consciousness

Sadhguru goes on to suggest many marriages would be saved if this economic and conscious use of words was implemented!

I tried this, after a particularly lovely yoga class, taking the feeling of Zen with me out of the class and into my day. I didn't speak to anyone when I got home. Not in a moody kind of way, but as a choice.

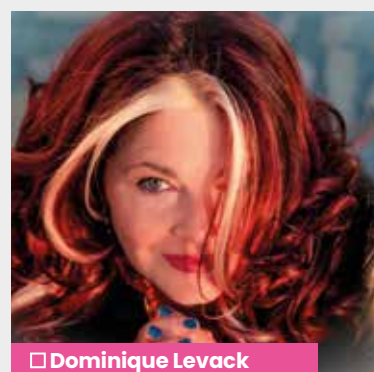
- **Dominique:** “I wondered if we had become as noisy on the outside as our minds are on the inside.”


It was calming and I became a lot more aware of the natural sounds around me when back at home. The birds, the low hum of cars, the dog barking and then intermittently, the quiet. Absence of sound. Space between sounds. Is this silence? It's a beautiful sound if so, even fleetingly, beyond the immediate, and into the infinity.

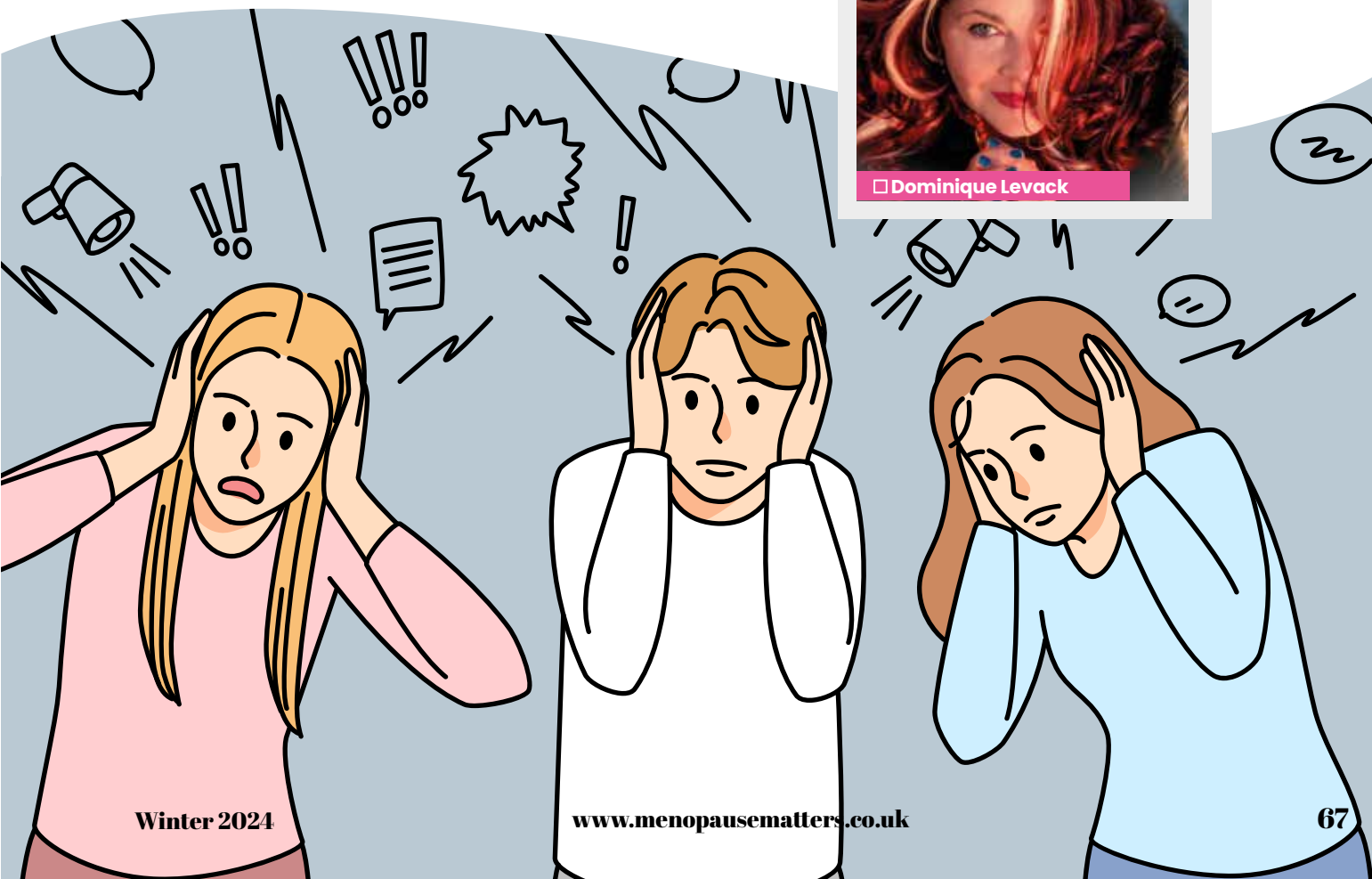
It really did bring a sense of calm and peace to my day.

My family noticed and interestingly didn't immediately ask me why I was being quiet, they just picked up on it, and became quieter themselves! It was quite remarkable how the sense of this quiet stillness was catching. Was it because I was light in my energy, nothing was wrong, so no one had to fix anything? They just adopted the same, and we all benefitted from the peace of minds.

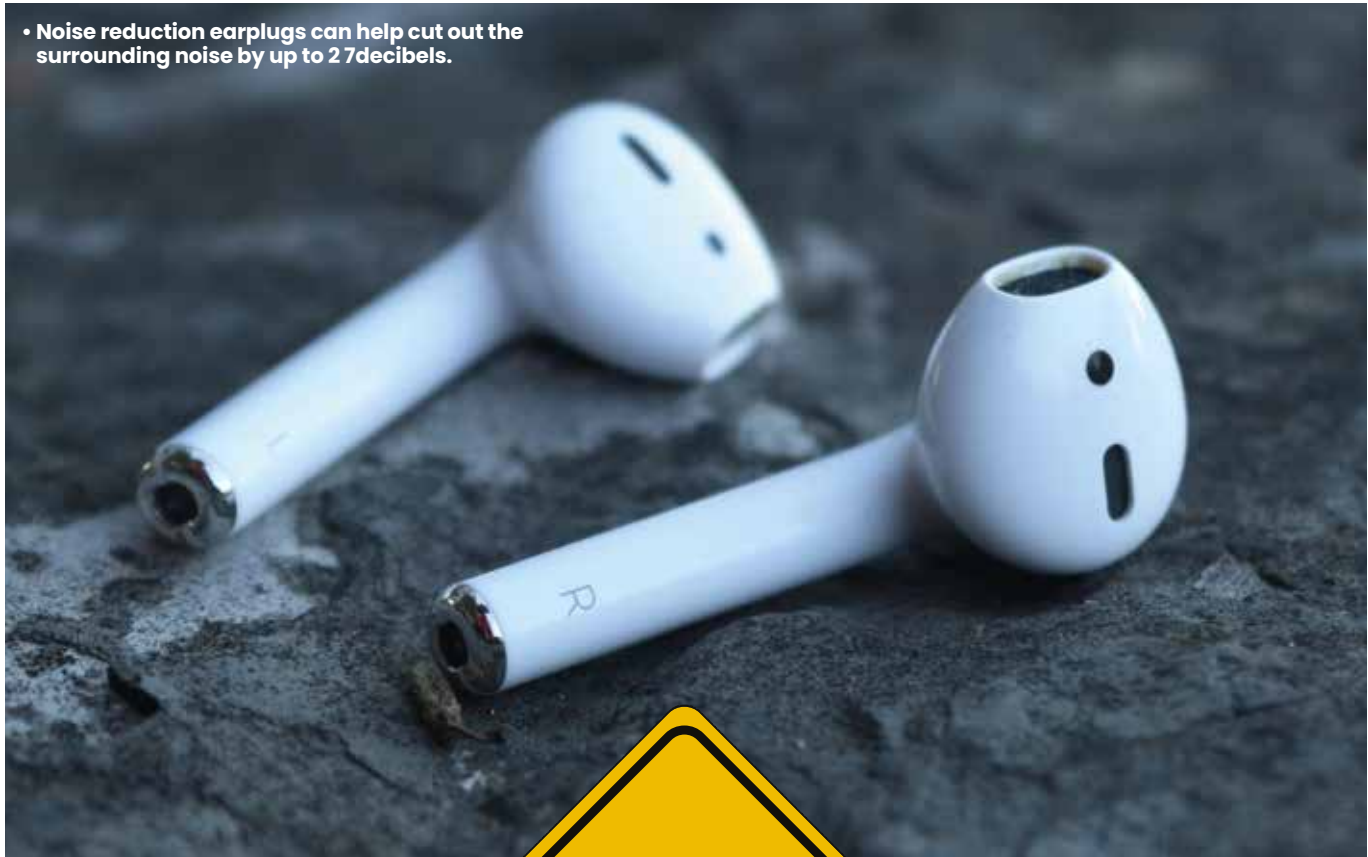
Eric Pfeifer & Marc Wittmann (<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7142212/>) conducted research in 2020 on the perception of silence that had remarkable insights regarding its positive effects on individuals. They conducted a series of studies during which individuals were exposed to 6:5 to 7:5 minutes of silence in different contexts. →



 **Dominique Levack**



• Noise reduction earplugs can help cut out the surrounding noise by up to 27decibels.



Silence was judged to significantly increase relaxation, improve mood states, and alter the perception of time and the orientation toward the present moment.

In other studies silence was found to lower the diastolic blood pressure, heart rate, and breathing rate and to decrease cortisol levels (Bernardi et al., 2006; Trappe and Voit, 2016).

Listening to slow or meditative music led to even greater relaxation if combined with randomly inserted pauses according to this study. However, in previous issues of *Menopause Matters* we have detailed how beneficial meditation and 432hz frequency music can be. So the science is now proving what we feel (Bernardi et al., 2006).

Norwegian explorer and author of *Silence, In the Age of Noise*, Erling Kagge, achieved great things in the pursuit and understanding of silence. He was the first person to reach the South Pole alone. Erling suggests exploring: "Silence within us can open the door to wonder and gratitude" and said: "I believe silence is the new luxury."

Concerned that his teenage daughters were constantly on their mobile phones he worked out that that if you spent 3 to 4 hours on your phone screen scrolling and lived to 83 yrs old, that would be 13 years of our lives looking at a phone screen. This inspired *Silence, In the Age of Noise* (2017).

QUIET ZONE

Reconnection

To unplug and reconnect in silence does sound like a good antidote to the ever, insistent demand for our attention.

The drone and hum of modern day life has become noise pollution, and the unwanted soundtrack to the urban lives we lead.

As I wandered down Queen Street in Brighton on a recent Saturday I was struck at the sheer level of noise coming from both the street and the road. Traffic, police sirens, business's spilling onto the streets, it was quite shocking. One man sat outside a bar was actually shouting and laughing so loudly to his friends I had to side step the noise like it was an oncoming punch. It was visceral. His noise pollution was like an upper cut, impactful and jarring. As I turned around to see what kind of man he was, he looked normal, and totally unaware of himself being noisy, in complete unconscious oblivion.

I wondered if we have become as noisy on the outside as our minds are on the inside, and as a result we have to raise our volume just to be heard.

Power of nature to impose calm

Spending time in solitude in nature does help quiet my mind, raises my awareness, and I think more deeply



unplugged

and clearly. And I'm not alone, the rise of silent retreats across the wellbeing space is growing.

It may sound crazy but people are paying money to spend time closer to nature in basic accommodation, in silence. It's getting back to real basics, but perhaps we can only find this peace and calm outside of our normal lives? Like a holiday for the mind, where there is no expectation from others and we go inwards to find authenticity of our true selves. What better way to find our own nature than to be in nature, silently?

While writing this article, I have deliberately sought quiet, and have become more aware of my sound environment. Noticing noise. As a musician I am sensitive to noise and get stressed quickly in loud environments. Having ADHD too it's easy for me to

get sensory overload, but it's something I now take a lot more seriously. I give myself *silence* time out regularly during the day.

I have bought noise reduction earplugs and wear them at work, on public transport, in public places, and especially at music gigs. The earplugs reduce the surrounding noise by up to 27 decibels, which allows my brain to function and not be bombarded. They help me operate when I have no control over the sound environment. There's probably a range for every occasion from sleeping through studying to sporting events, and life has become quieter and happier for me!

The pursuit of silence can only be helpful to our wellbeing, and especially during menopause. Taking time for us, prioritizing our own mental health has never been more important. Perhaps the best thing about seeking silence is that it's free! We just need to find the time, and make it a habit.

Listen to your soundscape and then try the 7-minute silence time out in your own day, and see how it feels. **MM**



• Spending time in nature can often help to quieten the mind.

Dominique is a music specialist and relationship coach.

She started hosting retreats in the Alpujarra mountains of Granada, Spain where she spent 10 years as one of the first female DJ's playing under the name DJ Aquarius, fusing Flamenco and world music in the early 2000's.

September 2023 saw her host her first retreat for women in peri & menopause and she is planning more in 2025 both in the UK & Spain. Retreats include breathwork, yoga, nature walks and lots of time to yourself.

Please contact her for more details.

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