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THE SOUND OF SILENCE

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By: Debi Galler

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Hello darkness, my old friend, I've come to talk with you again, Because a vision softly creeping, Left its seeds while I was sleeping, And the vision that was planted in my brain Still remains Within the sound of silence.

Paul Simon might have been on to something when he wrote those words. In today's world, we all could do with a bit more silence.

As lawyers practicing in this digital age, we are surrounded by noise and distraction. Perhaps it is from the ping of our varied electronics, perhaps it is just from ambient noise from our surroundings, or perhaps it is from the internal monologue that seems to go on without respite. With all that noise and distraction it can be very difficult to find space to just think, ponder, consider, create.

Silence does not necessarily mean locking yourself in a padded cell, or putting on noise cancelling headphones. Rather, as noted by Thich Nhat Hanh in his book, Silence, the Power of Quiet in a World Full of Noise, silence is actually something that comes from the inside, not from the outside. Silence does not mean never speaking or engaging or doing things; after all, we do have jobs to do and bills to pay. Silence means we are not disturbed *on the inside*.

There may be moments when we think we are being silent because there is no external noise, but inside our mind is going off on some tangent or another. That is not true silence. The key is to be able to find silence in the midst of our hectic everyday lives.

Our inability to find silence in the midst of chaos, or at least the everyday turbulence, can result in our failure to truly connect with those around us, our clients, judges, colleagues, family. Instead, we react based on emotion, rather than respond based upon careful listening and attention. Breathing mindfully and becoming aware of our response to people and events around us is a deep and powerful practice (see attached link for my blog with a mindful breathing exercise). Instead of reacting or even thinking, we allow ourselves a moment to just be. Mindfulness can help us quiet our mind and help us achieve the *Sound of Silence*.

Often if things aren't going exactly as we wish them to, or we are having difficulty finding a solution to a particularly vexing problem, our inclination as lawyers is often to think we have to do more, think more, write more, research more, more, more, more. In fact, what we might need to do is less; less distraction, less noise, both externally and internally, so that we have space – space to be in silence – space to allow our intentions to germinate and flourish.

So take a moment and choose something to focus on. Perhaps it is your in-breath and out-breath. Perhaps it is the sound of the leaves rustling in the wind, or the rain splattering on a roof, the sound of your footsteps as you walk or even the sound of a car honking. Simply listen with your whole being and enjoy the S*ound of Silence*.

For more information on this topic, please contact the author, Debi Galler, on the firm's Business Reorganization and Business, Finance & Tax Teams

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Debi Galler

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