

Life Unplugged: Reconnecting with Your Deeper Self

David Masters

Stand back from yourself for a moment. Turn off your computer, your television, your radio, your MP3 player. Unplug your wireless router. Switch off your mobile phone. Return to yourself in the silence. Spend a day walking, reading, resting, meditating. Draw a picture. Paint. Bake a cake. Write a poem, or a song. Explore the beauty of nature.

Let your attachment to technology speak during this time. Hear the inner voices calling you back. They will say to you: "I'm bored and restless. I don't know what to do. There's nothing to do. It won't hurt to turn it on, just five minutes checking Facebook." It's almost an addiction. You're feeling cold turkey, as recovering drug addicts call it.

The voices calling you back are just thoughts. You do not have to listen to them. You do not have to act on them.

Unplug for an hour the first time. The next time, try two hours. Then a morning or afternoon. Then a whole day. What about a whole week? How does the prospect of a whole week unplugged feel?

In the silence, listen to your inner life. Become aware of the mystery that resides within you.

Take strength and courage from words of wisdom. The words of the mystics who have gone beyond virtual reality and reality to Reality.

Trappist monk Thomas Merton said the distractions of modern life – including technology – can lead us to forget who we are. Living in a constant stream of talk and noise, we "escape from our deeper self and the questions it poses". Merton writes:

Now let us face the fact that our culture is one which is geared in many ways to help us evade any need to face this inner, silent self. We live in a state of constant semiattention to the sound of voices, music, traffic. [...] We are not fully *present* and not entirely absent; not fully withdrawn, yet not completely available. [...] We derive a certain comfort from the vague sense that we are 'part of something – although we are not quite able to define what the something is. [...] We just float along in the general noise.

The general noise becomes comforting. We become afraid of the silence, afraid to unplug, to switch off. Merton continues:

If we are afraid of being alone, afraid of silence, it is perhaps because of our secret despair of inner reconciliation. If we have no hope of being at peace with ourselves in our own personal loneliness and silence, we will never be able to face ourselves at all: we will keep running and never stop.¹

¹ Thomas Merton, *Essential Writings*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000), p 74-75.

Self-discovery and growth – growing into life with God, with our true selves and deepest desires, is a journey. Irish poet and mystic John O’Donohue says the internet has removed this journey of discovery from our lives. The digital world, O’Donohue writes, has

truncated time and space. Marooned on each instant, we have forfeited the practice of patience [...]. The self has become anxious for what the next instant might bring. This greed for destination obliterates the journey. The digital desire for the single instant schools the mind in false priority.

O’Donohue says we end up lost. Not only do we lose sight of who we are, of our real priorities – we also lose sight of where we are on the journey towards our true selves.

There is such a constant whirr of movement that you never know where you are. You have no time to give yourself to the present experience. When you accumulate experiences at such a tempo, everything becomes thin. Consequently, you become ever more absent from your life and this fosters emptiness that haunts the heart.²

Breaking away from the digital world, from modern technology, from its distractions and noise, you escape the constant whirr of movement that distracts you from your real self. You might rediscover your true priorities. You’ll discover a new fullness to life – creativity and vibrancy you never knew you had.

O’Donohue writes: “When you regain a sense of your life as a journey of discovery, you return to rhythm within yourself”.³

The silence will be difficult. Silence is a new experience in a world of noise. You’ll want to run away back to the comforts of noise and distraction. But is that really an escape? Amidst the distractions, the gentle voice of your true self will continue to call you. As the Psalmist asked, “where can I go to flee from God?”

Jesuit priest Anthony de Mello tells the story of the disciple who went to the master and said,

“Could you give me a word of wisdom? Could you tell me something that would guide me through my days?” It was the master's day of silence, so he picked up a pad. It said, “Awareness”. When the disciple saw it, he said, “This is too brief. Can you expand on it a bit?” So the master took back the pad and wrote, “Awareness, awareness, awareness.” The disciple said, “Yes, but what does it mean?” The master took back the pad and wrote, “Awareness, awareness, awareness means – awareness.”⁴

Come home to yourself. Remain in the silence. You’ll become more aware of your desires, your wants, of the people and the world around you.

- *David Masters is a freelance writer. He lives in the UK with his wife, Siona.*

² John O’Donohue, *Divine Beauty: The Invisible Embrace*, (London: Bantam Books, 2003), p 37.

³ O’Donohue, *Divine Beauty: The Invisible Embrace*, (London: Bantam Books, 2003), p 38.

⁴ Anthony de Mello, *Awareness*, (Fount, 1997).

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