Exterior Environment Assessment

Completed:

Noise is the criminal partner of distraction, two thieves that steal our time, long term peace, and impact. The reason noise thrives in our life is varied. Sometimes it is just sheer momentum like weeds gradually spreading across a grassy green lawn until the grass can no longer survive. Sometimes it is circumstantial and is something we must simply learn to live with and accept. But in almost all cases, noise is something we have a fairly high level of influence over.

That’s not to say we will naturally want to rid ourselves of noise. Noise is one of our best defenses against engaging the things that are most important. Noise comforts us and distracts us from the things that scare us.

As we learn to turn down the volume in our lives we simultaneously learn to engage reality as it is and to take on our most important work, ourselves.

Information

Today we live in a world where information is cheap and wisdom is expensive. It’s hard to go a day without being bombarded by information, much of which is a distraction from the things that matter most in our lives. As we learn to turn down the informational noise in our life, we are able to focus on only the information that truly matters, the information that uniquely serves us on our path to meaning and full(er) living.

How much information noise do I have in my life? Is the level of information I am taking in inhibiting me from having adequate room for silence and wisdom? What information noise is filling me with the wrong emotions and desires? What information pathways are a distraction to me living a full(er) life that is aligned with my values (be specific)?

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Rating: On a scale of 1 - 10 (10 being most satisfied), how satisfied are you with the level of informational noise in your life?

Plan of Action:

Sound

We get in the car and turn on the radio. We get home and turn on the TV. We go to the grocery store and hear a loop of the Billboard 100. It seems wherever we go there is a pervasive sense of more and more auditory noise. It’s not hard to imagine why we have such a hard time hearing the most important voices in our life, voices that often speak at the level of whispers. Monks live off a steady regiment of silence, a silence that for most of us is unattainable. But that doesn’t mean that we can’t intentionally choose greater silence in our life, and as a result hear the most important lessons on our path to full(er) living.

How much auditory noise do I have in my life? Is the level of auditory noise in my life inhibiting me from having adequate room to hear my interior voice? What auditory noise is filling me with the wrong emotions and desires? What audio pathways are a distraction to me living a full(er) life that is aligned with my values (be specific)?

Rating: On a scale of 1 - 10 (10 being most satisfied), how satisfied are you with the level of auditory noise in your life?

Plan of Action:

Activity
Busy. It’s a badge of honor in our society, but we sense wearing it comes at a cost, namely our peace and wellbeing. It’s worth calling out the real root of busyness in our lives. It’s not virtue— it’s Fear. At face value this fear seems to focus on what will happen to us materially if we don’t get done “all the things.” But often our fear is actually much deeper and ethereal. It is the fear of what we might discover if we were to actually slow down. The good news is there is nothing to fear as all the truths we may be running from are the exact truths we need to encounter most. Truth from a distance can look like an enemy, but as we engage it we discover it is ALWAYS our friend.

How much activity noise do I have in my life? Is the level of activity noise in my life inhibiting me from having a quiet and reflective presence? What activity noise is filling me with the wrong emotions and desires? What activities are a distraction to me living a full(er) life that is aligned with my values?

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Rating: On a scale of 1 - 10 (10 being most satisfied), how satisfied are you with the level of auditory noise in your life?

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Plan of Action:

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**Physical**

The physical environment of a monastery, by design, is similar to that of a desert. Things tend to be rather simple, austere and minimal. The walls are sparse and the personal belongings are few. This aesthetic movement is not inconsequential, because just as in a desert it is when you take away the visual noise that you can see for miles. If you are struggling to find perspective, if your life can feel like you are stuck in a dense forest surrounded by trees, simplifying your physical environment can be a great step towards freedom and a full(er) life.

How much physical noise do I have in my life? Is the level of physical noise in my life inhibiting me from feeling a sense of
tranquility and clarity of mind? What physical noise is filling me with the wrong emotions and desires? What physical noise are a distraction to me living a full(er) life that is aligned with my values?

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**Rating:** On a scale of 1 - 10 (10 being most satisfied), how satisfied are you with the level of physical noise in your life?

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**Plan of Action:**