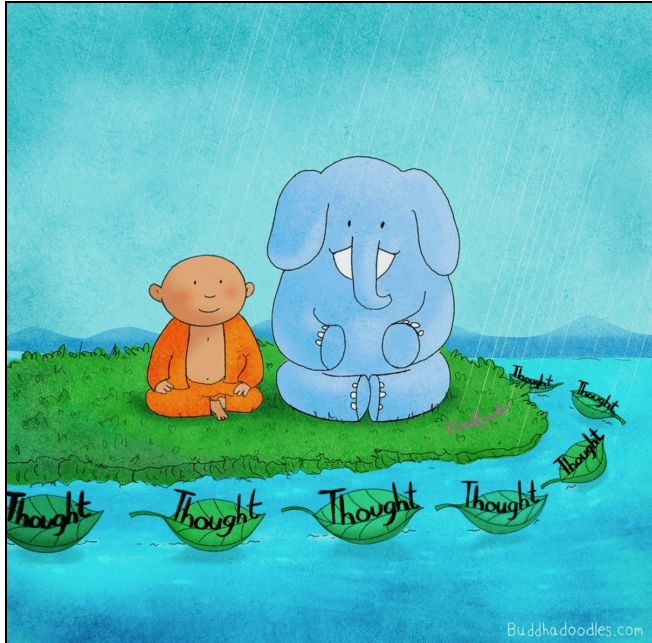


## **Filling Your Cup - June 2025**

***By Nirupama Madduri, M.D.***



With chaos erupting at every corner of our lives, finding peace and stillness may be a challenge. We all have our ways of numbing, usually involving electronics and scrolling. But, this may lead us down another path into doom and gloom. I read a book a few years ago by Pico Iyer called “The Art of Stillness”. In it, Mr. Iyer traveled to various places where

there was an emphasis on being away from the bustle of existence and returning to simplicity. The Oxford dictionary defines stillness as the “absence of movement or sound.” In a modern society, finding stillness may be a far away concept.

We are programmed to always be busy. In college and medical school, if we spent even one second not studying or reviewing, the guilt crept into our being. Our calendars have to be filled with the color-coded blocks, validating our need to feel busy or occupied. I see people constantly scrolling and staring at their phones. The urgency to check messages every few seconds results from the rare situation of adverse outcome that lives in our bones. Mental energy is spent and difficult to earn back when the noise clutters our lives.

For us to be in a place of stillness, we do not need to climb to the summit of a mountain or enter a cave. We can create a quiet space for ourselves anywhere. We all

own cell phones with accompanying Bluetooth headphones. There are apps available, such as Calm or Insight timer, where we can access relaxing music and sounds. I personally choose ocean waves or a light rainstorm. I also try to use natural lighting in my office, as fluorescent lights are visually overstimulating.

The most efficient way to achieve stillness is meditation. There are many paths, and the correct one is per the individual. On those days when our inboxes never seem to get close to being completed, when everyone needs a form completed yesterday, and the usual mayhem of the clinic is more intense, it's necessary to take a few minutes and be still. Breathing has been discussed before, and even a few intentional breaths can give us a second wind. We can tackle the curveballs our day throws at us.

Embracing moments of stillness help us become less reactive. When there is a stimulus, our parasympathetic nervous system is the dominant pathway and our bodies respond in a way that is natural and relaxed. While we are in stillness, we are slowing down our minds and our natural functions, such as breathing. For folks who have survived trauma, these techniques are recommended to help them when they encounter a triggering moment. Pediatricians are confronted with moments that are traumatic, especially because they are all dedicated to the wellbeing of children. Children do not always get to have a voice and we do our best to protect them. Our calm is our power. We can be intentional with our responses, and our compassion and authenticity will be the driving force for the work we do.