

A Pause I Didn't Know I Needed

The first thing that struck me was how loud the silence was.

No buzzing phone. No music streaming from my headphones. No notifications lighting up the screen every few seconds. Just the slow ticking of the kitchen clock and the whisper of wind through the windows. The power had been out for an hour or so, and it had been as though time had come to a halt.

I sat on the floor of my room, leaning against my bed, looking at my phone, even though I knew it was useless. One percent left. No service. No Wi-Fi access. I threw the phone against the ground in a fit of anger and started anxiously walking back and forth across my room.

Usually, my days come together in a big rush. School, homework, messages, videos, music; they all join together to become one giant mess. I'm constantly thinking ahead to what's next. What assignment is due, who's been trying to get in touch with me, what I still have to do, etc. It's never comfortable to just be still, since it feels like I'm wasting my time. And in that moment, without anywhere to be and nothing to look at, that feeling was strong.

I tried to distract myself by straightening my desk, opening my closet, and even organizing my bookshelf. Nothing interesting came out of it. I sighed and slumped back against my bed. That's when I realized how quiet my thoughts were.

It was uncomfortable at first. My brain kept expecting to hear noises it didn't. But as the silence went on, something odd started to occur. I found myself thinking about things I normally didn't have the time to consider. Such as how tired I'd been lately. Or how I always tell everyone "I'm fine," even when I'm not really sure that's true.

I sat there and stared at the ceiling of my room, and suddenly thought about how I couldn't recall the last time I'd done absolutely nothing. Not "nothing" while watching a video, not "nothing" while listening to music, but nothing. Simply stillness.

Eventually, I could hear my dad moving about in the living room. A few minutes passed before he knocked on my door, handing me a flashlight. I ended up on the couch with my dad, talking quietly so we wouldn't echo through the darkness. Not about anything important; just random recollections, minor jokes, things we could take our time talking about.

Time felt different then. Slower. Softer. It didn't seem to be slipping away from me.

When the lights finally came back on, I felt a strange sense of relief and disappointment. Everything came back: the noise, the lights, the speed. My phone buzzed with notifications as if nothing had happened. But something *had* happened, even though it didn't look like it.

That pause showed me how loud my life had been and how little room I had been leaving for myself to breathe. It didn't completely change me. I'm still busy. I'm still in a rush. But sometimes I find the time to pause long enough to put my phone down. To stop filling in the moments.

I didn't know I needed that pause until it was forced on me. But I think that's kind of the point. Sometimes, when the world is slowed down, it's not necessarily because we're losing anything. It's because we're gaining something meaningful.