

Quiet life's chaos

Car alarms and blaring commercials aren't just incredibly annoying—they could also harm your health. Research links regular exposure to excessive noise to sleep disturbances, memory

lapses and heart problems. There is an antidote, however: old-fashioned peace and quiet. Here, five women tell how they steal some silent moments in an increasingly clamorous world. —Vanessa G. Ahern

“Each afternoon, I take a few minutes and turn off or unplug everything in my office—my phone, my computer. Then I play ocean-wave sounds on my iPod, light a sea-scented candle and imagine that I'm relaxing at the beach.”

NETTIE HARTSOCK, 40, SAN MARCOS, TEXAS

“After work, I'll walk through the park to pick up my daughter, even though it takes longer than going by subway. I love being alone among the trees—it's often the only time I have to myself.”

GRETCHEN SONJU, 35, NEW YORK CITY

“I like to get up early, grab the paper and settle down with my cereal to do the crossword puzzle. Focusing on that grid of boxes energizes me so I'm able to face the day ahead.”

KATYA HOTTENSTEIN, 20,
MOORESTOWN, NEW JERSEY

“When I'm cooking dinner, I'll often lie on the sofa while the food is simmering, close my eyes and daydream. Afterward, I feel happier and more alert.”

CATHY SHAMIR, 44, NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Lock down
Silence your cell phone for a calmer commute.



“I hit an indoor rock-climbing wall to decompress. When I'm climbing, I'm aware of every part of my body, concentrating only on my next move. The noise below me goes away, and in my head there is total silence.”

ANDREA DIRUSCIO, 26,
NEWBURYPORT,
MASSACHUSETTS