

Our world is seemingly becoming increasingly violent, chaotic, and tumultuous. Wars, economic issues, droughts, floods, the pandemic, gun violence, hunger, loneliness, and many other issues have not only had consequences for the people directly affected by these, but they have also affected society as a whole. Seeing tragedies unfold day after day causes many of us to lose our sense of peace. It may feel like our society is falling apart. Despite this, many *Skipping Stones* readers have submitted their articles, poems, and stories on how they have found peace in these chaotic times and on what peace means to them. Some pieces centered on specific ways to find inner peace.

Meditation is a proven way to find inner peace. We may think it is difficult. However, in reality, meditation is simply a way to calm the mind and focus on the present moment. One way to meditate is to sit in a quiet place, close our eyes so we aren't distracted by other things, and just focus on the breath. This can help us be more mindful of our thoughts. It can also help us realize that despite all the chaos in the world, in many cases, we are okay in a given moment. When we think about our immediate surroundings and what we are doing now—things are likely okay in this exact moment. It is often anxiety about the future, or regrets about the past that weigh us down. This applies both to world events and to issues in our own personal lives. In either case, focusing on where we are in the present moment, can help us achieve a sense of peace.

There are many ways to meditate—we can even do it while walking. The point is to try and calm the mind and be mindful of our thoughts. This helps us filter out the noise, stress, and pressures in our everyday life, and focus on centering ourselves. Simply pausing to reflect on our lives and appreciating what we have can help us be more at peace and calm. Being thankful for the things we have—a place to live, food to eat, and people who care for us—helps us achieve inner peace.

Some of us may have a difficult time 'stilling' our mind for very long. Luckily, there are other ways to find inner peace. Being in nature, whether we're walking, biking, or hiking, can also be very calming. Our daily lives are very busy, and we are constantly being bombarded with demands, information, sights, and

sounds. This can cause a sensory overload. However, when we're in nature, things are more peaceful. Instead of honking cars and yelling drivers, we hear the rustle of trees in the wind, the gurgling of a river, or the chirping of birds. The result is that we experience reduced stress levels and a much better overall sense of calm. Furthermore, it helps us focus on what is around us, just as meditation does, so that we can be in the present moment. When we inhale forest air, we expose ourselves to phytoncides—natural chemicals that plants give off—which have proven health benefits. Being in nature lowers blood pressure and, yes, stress.

Engaging in our favorite hobbies can also help us achieve inner peace. Hobbies allow us to relax, focus on the activity we are doing, and take a break from our stressful lives. One hobby that's especially helpful is making art. It helps us focus on the present moment as we engage our creative side. It also helps us express how we're feeling. For example, if we are painting something, we can express calm emotions by gentler paintbrush strokes. Conversely, if we are feeling angry, our paint strokes might be more rigid. Still, the act of painting can help us release our negative feelings, and as we express our creativity, we feel more peaceful.

Even if we alone cannot create peace in the outside world, we can certainly work to achieve peace within ourselves. No matter what methods work for you, be it meditation, being in nature, or engaging in some hobby, making these activities a regular part of your life can help you to center yourself, despite all the chaos around us. Mahatma Gandhi said: Be the change you wish to see in the world.

Helping each other is another wonderful way to achieve inner peace. When we help people in need, when we share things we have with others, or when we see a smile on someone's face, we get a sense of satisfaction, a sense of belonging and peace.

Thank you for sharing your creations, opinions, experiences—your truths! Whether your piece was selected or not, it's always good to keep on writing and being creative. It's yet another way to peace. Since we received many more worthy entries than what we could fit in this issue, we'll publish them in our next issue, and also online. Please do visit the website often.