

Inner Peace

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To study the phenomenon of inner peace one needs first to consider peace as a concept. Peace is a word with rich and diverse meanings. Historically, it meant the basic absence of conflict or war. In the Hebrew tradition, shalom was used as a courteous greeting and a genuine wish for health and prosperity. The Old Testament usage of this word generally implied soundness, completeness, and total well-being. It had several tangible aspects referring to personal safety from danger, length of days, and a quiet and easy death. It was used to describe good relations among individuals, communities, and nations. Peace was often associated with true friendship, righteousness, and sound judgment. Most important, peace implied tranquility, contentment, serenity, and wholeness. In the Greek literature, *eirene* meant an underlying principle, a harmonious state of mind, and a tranquility that could exist regardless of external circumstances.

Peace has also a theological dimension. It reaches its full meaning in the context of a personal relationship with God. Ultimately, God is the author and giver of peace; therefore, an authentic peace cannot be experienced or attained in isolation from God. In the Scriptures, there is an obvious correlation between being in the kingdom, that is, being part of the covenant, and having peace with God.

Most of the church fathers deeply acknowledged the idea and eagerly pursued inner peace. For Thomas Aquinas, inner peace is tranquility both within and without. It is the harmony of desires when the human soul is directed by charity. That is only possible when our will and intellect guide our passions. However, partial peace is attainable in this lifetime.

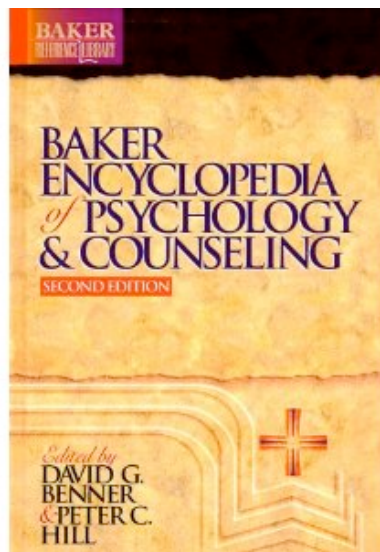
Some thinkers and philosophers equate inner peace with solitude. Although there is a natural connection between the two, experiencing inner peace is not limited to solitude or to creative aloneness. And the question that poses itself today is how can a state of inner peace be achieved in this industrial and technological age? To answer this, we need to consider the different aspects of our functioning and various faculties of our personality. Maintaining a balanced lifestyle and exercising healthy habits on multiple levels will eventually result in a state of inner harmony and lead to an experience of peace within.

On the emotional level, experiencing inner peace may include striving to discover our basic emotional needs, facing unresolved issues and incomplete matters, seeking healing for our remaining open wounds or hurtful memories, continuing personal growth, fortifying our internal resiliency, maintaining emotional stability, giving and receiving nurture, and building meaningful relationships. On the mental level, the experience of peace within may involve watching our inner anxieties, correcting our faulty thinking, negative automatic statements, disruptive ideas, and irrational beliefs, refining our coping strategy, basic attitude, and approach to life, practicing mental alertness and stimulation, and sharing in the joy of learning.

On the physical level, the pursuit of inner peace may include getting enough rest, eating properly and healthy, exercising regularly, decreasing or limiting the sources of stress, balancing work and play, remaining in touch with nature, and enjoying the beauty of creation. On the spiritual level, such pursuit may involve practicing closeness and intimacy with God, enjoying meaningful worship experiences both corporate and personal, memorizing Scriptures, singing and listening to Christian music, engaging in a particular incarnational ministry, and cultivating purity of passion and transparency of soul.

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See also: Religious Experience



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