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Myra House Reflections
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It has now been six months since I first came to the Myra House. I remember being drawn to the place and lifestyle that was so different from Southern California. I felt that this was a place of healing. It was different from anything that I had ever seen and I was curious to experience more. So I applied, was accepted, and began my stay at the Myra House.

Upon moving to the Myra House, my mind and body at first resisted the slower pace of life. I longed for a quieter internal and external world yet being placed in this kind of an environment was uncomfortable. I was used to a lifestyle where everything moved along quickly, like a race. Time was a challenge. Something I was fighting for and fighting against. I was taught that the goal was to be efficient. Spread myself as thin as I could but still manage to survive. This is the goal of a college student. Or a parent. Or average American worker. We go until we can't do anymore.

My first realization at the Myra House was the need to simplify my life. Big isn't necessarily better, as even the Mac industry understands. Another Myra House resident and I recently saw someone holding a mini iPad and wondered that as the iPad becomes smaller and smaller if it will come to look just like the iPhone. And once again Macintosh will have to come up with something novel. This past year, I have worked on downscaling on my possessions. Since doing this, I have actually experienced more creativity of the mind. Having fewer possessions has made me more creative in using what I do have and more aware of the resources around me. But at the Myra House I realized that simplicity is not limited to possessions. It also applies to my schedule, friend group, and commitments. In college, I felt the need to know everyone, do everything, and pack my schedule as tight as I could. I wanted to make use of every hour I had. Over the past few months, I have begun to choose my commitments more wisely and not feel such a hurry to do so much in one day. I have learned to leave myself more time to transition between activities in order to be more present in what I am doing. Being at the Myra House, I have simplified my schedule, those I spend my time with, and my belongings.

I believe that one of the biggest challenges to simplicity is technology. Cell phones, computers, cars, airplanes – anything that speeds up the pace of this world. Technology makes it possible for us to almost be anywhere, do anything, at almost any time. Hundreds of years ago life was a lot simpler when people would only travel to places within walking distance or converse with those who were in their presence. With technology, everything seems accessible and possible. In the matter of minutes we can be at a friend's house or in a matter of hours be on the other side of the country. Instead of spending time with friends or family at a restaurant, there is the temptation to respond to emails and messages from others. Sometimes it is more comfortable to interact with phones instead of those around us. Technology is meant for good, not harm. To make our lives easier, not more complicated. But often the opposite is true and technology grabs a hold of our lives. Because technology offers so many possibilities, it is a challenge to simplicity and presence.

So what is it we can do to keep ourselves present? Despite the challenges of this age, I do believe it is possible. The Myra House showed me that with enough discipline and prioritizing, there is a different lifestyle that can be lived. For some people, it is the earth that keeps them present. I know this is true for many that live at the Myra House. It is activities like gardening and hiking that bring us joy and presence. I've heard that when many people are asked what their favorite memory is often it is one that took place in nature. Nature leaves a footprint on us that is unlike any other. Since being at the Myra House, I have experienced a greater connection to the earth – a better understanding of the animals and plants and cycles and how similar the earth is to us complex human beings. But so often, we spend the majority of our time inside. We live in an age of convenience and comfort. For others, it is community that keeps them present. Being around friends or family. And yet for others, it is time spent alone or in meditation that centers them in the moment. It is different for everyone, but important for each of us to find what keeps us present with our surroundings.

For myself, I have realized that to stay in the moment I must recognize and let go of what is outside of my control. Over the past six months I have struggled to stay full time with my job. I work with autistic children providing services for them within their home, but this means my work schedule is dependent upon the family's schedule and any changes that may include. Over the summer I managed to stay partially full-time by picking up extra hours here and there but over the last two months my work became very part-time. At first I was concerned about finances, but God somehow kept my bank account steady throughout those months. I was then offered a full-time job in Northern California that I accepted. But I still wanted to be working during my last two months in Southern California. So I searched and searched and searched but nothing ever came of it. It was difficult to find work when I knew I was moving. Looking back at it now, I wish I could have enjoyed myself those last two months instead of spending most of my time searching for work. I felt the need to be busy just like my friends in school or at work. But I wish I could have recognized that no matter how hard I tried, my efforts were not working. I am not in control of every detail of my life as I had previously thought. Now I realize that when something is not working, the best thing I can do is recognize what is out of my control and still choose to enjoy my situation.

Here at the Myra House I have started to accept that change is slow. In myself, in others, in this world. There is much change to be done but there is a process that awaits. I have realized that my goal of simplicity is not going to happen overnight. That's why it's been a slow process for me over this past year, but I've had friends to support me in this lifestyle and model for me the joy of being detached from possessions, money, and technology. More than simplicity, being present is something I've desired for a long time. But it cannot happen instantly. It is a gradual process that has in my situation been aided by a positive living environment, healthy circle of friends, and mindfulness practices. I do believe that here at the Myra House I have experienced a holistic healing of the mind, body, and spirit. I have noticed my mind becoming more creative with my time at the Myra House, my body becoming more relaxed, and my spirit becoming more peaceful. I am grateful for my experience and all that I have learned during my stay.