

Pause

News and views from the Quiet Garden Movement


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Our guide to mobile phones and contemplation

Mobile phones have hugely changed the way we live and communicate, bringing with them many new tools and ways of doing things. They are not something we may associate with Quiet Gardens, and generally when visiting a Quiet Garden or event we find it best if they are turned off, or left at home, to avoid the challenges of it competing for our attention and distracting us from switching off and finding stillness. But that isn't always possible and for some it is alienating. They can also give us access to a range of tools that can help us meditate and pray.

How can we make mobile phones, and the technology they bring, work for us rather than letting them constantly distract us? What apps are there to help us focus?

Here we share some ideas for using your mobile for contemplation, as well as a stilling exercise, and our favourite apps.

Dealing with distraction

The frequently touted remedy to our mobile phones is a “**digital detox**” –banning yourself from connectivity for hours or days at a time. This can work for some, but for others it can also have the perverse effect of making the banned object more enticing. Another approach is to **make your mobile ‘boring’**,

turning off notifications, badges and deleting or ‘hiding’ distracting apps in folders. Most mobile phones offer a **silent mode**. In conjunction with a **‘timer’** (see overleaf), turning on **‘Airplane Mode’** and **‘Do Not Disturb’** modes when you want to create distraction-free time, will help make your mobile work for you rather than against you.

There are many tools to help us focus our mind, that we often refer to as '**anchors**'. Having something in your hand as you practice silent contemplative prayer can provide an 'anchor', helping to prevent the mind wandering. One such anchor is an **object**, and it can take many forms, such as a prayer rope or a holding cross, and in this exercise we use our mobile phone. It is a simple way to nurture being mindful and staying connected to yourself when you're using technology.

1. Sit comfortably, hold your device in your hands in your lap. Ideally close your eyes. Let your shoulders drop. Take three breaths. Observe the feeling of the device in your hand. Feel the weight of the device in your hands. Notice the different textures. The smoothness of the screen. The hardness. The bumps of the buttons. The temperature. You might like to touch the device to your cheeks and feel the temperature that way.

2. Breathe. Slowly open your eyes, and observe the device in your hands. Without getting drawn into what's on the device explore it. Breathe. Shoulders dropped. Feel the weight. The smoothness of the screen. The hardness. The bumps of the buttons. The temperature.

3. When we bring more awareness to what it is to hold our phone in this relaxed intentional way, with practice we can stay connected to ourself and tune into to these feelings of calm.

TOOLS AND APPS

There are many many apps that offer tools to aid contemplation and meditation - here are a few favourites.

A simple timer

Before getting distracted by the many apps on offer it is worth noting that every phone has an in-built simple timer that can be really valuable for contemplation and meditation.

Knowing you have a timer set for whatever length of time you have allocated can really help you switch-off and pay attention to what you have chosen to do rather than getting distracted by recurring thoughts of what the times is.

Simply set the timer on your mobile to alert you to when your time is up – using this in conjunction with 'Aeroplane' and 'Do Not Disturb' modes will also prevent you being distracted by other alerts.

Buddhify | buddhify.com

For a small one off fee you get lots of creative mindfulness based meditations for a range of situations, from 'travelling', 'walking', 'with a friend', 'using your phone' and 'sleep', as well as 'meditation 101' and 'in nature'. There is also a section just for kids, as well as a solo timer with optional interval bells.

Insight Timer | insighttimer.com

This free app, offers in-app purchases, comes with lots of guided meditations from a range

of teachers and backgrounds, as well as a fancy timer.

Pray as you Go | pray-as-you-go.org

Created by the Jesuits this shares a daily prayer session based on Ignatian Spirituality based and designed to help you pray whenever you find time, but particularly whilst travelling to and from work etc.

Time to Pray | chpublishing.co.uk

Access to Morning, Evening and Night Prayer from the Church of England, as well as the lectionary. Free for online use, subscription fee for offline use.

WCCM | wccm.org/content/new-wccm-app

From the World Community for Christian Meditation this app is free and comes with a timer, instructions for meditation and prayers, as well as links to reflections and further resources.

We hope this article has been useful. The Quiet Garden Movement nurtures access to outdoor space for prayer, reflection and rest in a variety of settings. Find out more you're your local Quiet Gardens at:

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 INFO@QUIETGARDEN.ORG

 01494 578909