

Keeping Your Cool in a Crazy World

Our 24/7 news feed thrives on alarm, anxiety and anger. What do we get out of this? Some information, maybe, but mostly ulcers and a personal world full of instability—no solid ground to stand on.

But you can counter all the craziness. Here's an exercise to strengthen your peace, maintain "grace under fire," and learn to float above the fray.

Bach, Concerto for 2 Violins, d minor, mvt 2, David and Igor Oistrakh , violin, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Sir Eugene Goossens, conductor, Deutsche Grammophon

- **Exercise:** just float with the music—freely fly and soar.
- Imagine that you are a single wing – a bird wing or an angel wing.
- Like any real happiness, peace is active. You have to do it.
- Leave all your baggage behind—just for a few minutes! Baggage, by the way, is a phantom form of gravity. It weighs down your enthusiasm, your verve, your spirit.
- We often try to forget our baggage with phantom forms of peace: oblivion (i.e., drink, drugs, sex, food). **Don't get Peace mixed up with oblivion!**
- Feel you're here in Monument Valley, looking up at "The Eye of the Sun."



- Breathe slowly. Try to have one breathing cycle (inhale/exhale) for each full phrase of the music.
- Look up at the "oculus," the Eye of the Sun. Imagine that your Being, your Soul, is floating and flying in contented bliss somewhere beyond that portal.
- That's it. Just keep letting your spirit float and fly, like an invisible wing. And breathe slowly.
- You only need to listen to about 2½ minutes of this piece, but if you get restless, keep trying to float! And if you want to be good to yourself, listen to the whole 7½ minutes of this movement.

- Because **you want to teach your Being about the relief, the breath, of contentment.**
- FYI, the two violinists in this recording are father and son—both extraordinary masters of their instrument. And their love, their devotion to creating beauty, is sublime.

Why do this exercise? It is a great way to cut the continuous looping of annoyance and frayed nerves that can so easily overwhelm you—and those around you. Once you've uploaded this piece of music into your emotional brain, you can stop the accelerating anxiety that can otherwise derail our lives. And that goes for any time, any situation. Not just the current physical sequestering we're doing now to help keep our health and possibly save our lives. Not bad for a few minutes of great music!

A word on the music selections I use. Music—good or bad—has power. It bypasses the rational brain and goes right into your inner world—imprinting itself in your subconscious. Great music, coupled with simple imagination exercises, can help build invisible structures that let you call up a particular mode of behavior at a moment's notice. I use a lot of Bach in particular, because Baroque pieces typically create a single *stimmung* (tr: mood, environment, atmosphere) and stick with it throughout the piece. That's why they're often quite good for establishing an understanding and ability to recall the mode, or force field, of a feeling.

By the way, there may be many other performances of the music I use, but they won't necessarily elicit the same mood. Often, very few recordings are successful. And for some exercises, there may only be one recording that works. So when in doubt, use the specific ones I've noted!