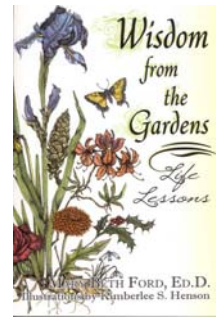




Dr. Mary Beth Ford's



Garden Wisdom Secrets

Life Balance and the Need for Solitude -- Life Lessons from Nature

We seek many things in this world to bring us happiness and inner peace. We set goals and work hard to achieve them. But in doing so, we often neglect our inner needs--the desires of our spirit. We struggle with the push-pulls between inner and outer worlds. Quiet time alone renews us and helps restore our life balance. Solitude is not a luxury.

We all have a need for solitude--for quiet time alone.

Only in solitude can we know our true selves. Only in solitude can we know our deepest thoughts and feelings. We begin to understand our life purpose and the special gifts we have to share in the world. But we need quiet to hear our inner voice and receive guidance. *How can we expect wisdom from within if we're never still enough to listen?* We must preserve time in each day to meet this need for stillness. We must renew our efforts daily to create a center of peace within.

Nature shows us the link between solitude and creative expression.

From nature we learn that our creative work in the world requires time for inner growth and change. Seeds receptive to nutrients from earth, rain and sun become the lovely blossoms of our gardens and flower boxes. Tasty nutlets forgotten by squirrels transform into the mighty oaks and beech trees that grow in our forests and provide welcome shade in summer. Millions of bulbs planted each fall evolve into graceful daffodils blowing in the wind and announcing spring's arrival. Creative expression is a mystery. It comes from the longings of the heart. *Times of solitude make known your heartfelt desires and release your deepest fears.* You emerge prepared to share your gifts with the world.

Solitude benefits body, mind and Spirit.

Quiet times alone bring us back in touch with who we really are. They relieve the stress that afflicts body and mind. Daily responsibilities create what seem like insurmountable obstacles to a peaceful solitude. But we pay an enormous price for ignoring our inner needs. Solitude is not a luxury to be enjoyed only during vacations. We cannot store up its benefits in some spiritual account for withdrawal during the rest of the year. *What matters is that we resolve to set time aside each day to honor and nurture our inner selves.*

The challenge of how to care for the soul in the midst of life's busyness requires an individual solution. Simply put: What do you enjoy doing that quiets your mind and feeds your creative center? These activities are not luxuries in your life. They allow you to pay attention to your inner needs for a while. In solitude you will discover the life balance that you have desired for so long. Let planning for peace and not pressure become your guiding principle.