



Inner Peace Inner Power: Insights by Women Leaders

8 March 2023

Innovation and technology for gender equality

The theme for UN International Women's Day 2023 is “**DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality.**” I was asked how I leverage this theme, as a woman leader. At the office, to launch International Women's day week, we had an **informal discussion** about supporting women in the workplace, avoiding bias, helping to create opportunity, respecting bodily integrity, addressing harassment and discrimination, being an ally, and more. I believe **conversation is part of raising awareness and contributing to social change.** However, conversation is not enough, we need to **address systemic injustices.** How are women farmers shaping technological innovations to respond to their challenges and aspirations? Community-based childcare centres in low-income neighborhoods are an innovation shown to make a difference for families; how can such centres become part of national policy and be scaled? How are we closing gender pay gaps in our organizations? These are just a few examples of areas where we can collectively invest in innovation to make society better.

Leading a team

As a leader, I work with a team of 30 people. I feel a responsibility to **consider my colleagues as complete human beings.** I am **curious** about their ambitions and aspirations and ready to support them. To do that work, I need to first take care of and be in touch with myself.

Checking in with me

I need to take time to **check in with me,** rather than just rush around doing things in the world. Some ask: **Is self-time selfish?** I know that when I take time for me, I am more

centred and grounded in who I am and what I'm about. I can be more present, listen better, and be more useful in the world that way.

Being conscious about how we invest our energy

We all have **energy**. I like to think of it as our vitality or **life force**. I try to be conscious about where I invest my energy. I try to **invest in spaces where I have something to contribute and will be nourished**. I do not want to be drained by senseless activity.



Bringing ourselves to the table

I asked women friends and colleagues what they learned through **leadership training**. Several said that, after the training, they gave themselves permission to **bring themselves to bear on their work**. Sometimes, as women leaders, we can feel insecure. We try to **conform**, and we may **leave our gifts in the closet**. Through leadership training, and meditation, we can **be more in touch with our strengths** and bringing them to the table. It may seem intimidating to **be our authentic selves**, but when we are, **we empower ourselves and those around us**.

What does it mean to be a leader?

I think we need to rethink the idea of “woman leader.” Being a leader does not mean you are a “Director” of something. I believe **we lead from wherever we are in an organization, in society**. We need to **lead in line with our values and what makes for better community**. To align with our values and the needs of a community, we need time not only to act but to **introspect**. Time for introspection and meditation can make us better listeners, learners, and leaders.

Inner Peace Inner Power

The **way we show up in the world** is a **reflection of our inner being**. If we are **frantic** on the inside, that is how we will show up. If we are **serene and loving inside**, that is how we will show up. It takes time, commitment, and awareness to cultivate love. And, of course, few of us are always serene and loving. The other day I felt scattered and unbalanced. I paused to think about it. I realized I had not been on my yoga mat for two days, so I made time in the morning for movement and a brief meditation. I felt more centred the whole day. When we commit to regularly take time to be still and connect with our inner being, our true self shines forth.

Meditation does not need to be complicated

Yoga teacher B. K. S. Iyengar writes in “The Tree of Life” how the benefits of yoga come with regularity. I ask new yoga students to practice one posture or asana each day. It is in so doing that the practice of yoga can become regular, and we experience the benefits.

In the same way, let us not make meditation complicated in the beginning. Try to avoid gadgets like mobile phones for one hour before bed and one hour after you wake up.¹ Find *two minutes* – or even just one – each night before bed. Or when you wake up, to start your day.

Sit quietly. Be still. Go inside. Listen to the wisdom of the heart centre. Your sleep, or your day will be better for it. You will be more in tune with yourself and more aligned with the universe. Life will be better.

Thoughts of Kathryn Toure, in preparation for participation in the March 8, 2023 panel, in Nairobi, Kenya, on “Inner Peace Inner Power.” Namaste.



¹ However, for those who really like the apps, Tapping Solution was good for me, to help reduce anxiety and pain after a bout of covid. And I've heard people appreciate InsightTimer, Headspace: Mindful Meditation, Calm, Waking Up, and Lighthouse – for meditation, breathwork, relaxation, sleep and more.

Two-minute breathing exercise

Feel the **sitting bones** on the chair.
Feel the **soles of the feet** connected with the Earth,
Providing stability.
Feel the **spine long**.
The **eyes** can be closed,
Or slightly open and looking gently down.



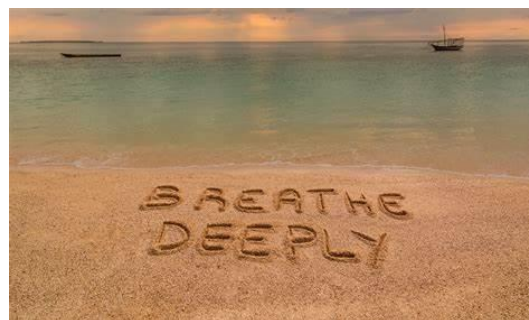
Listen to the breath moving through you.
Become aware of the **exhale**.
On the exhale, **let go of tension**.
Let go of what you are holding inside.
On each exhale, **let go and let be**.
Feel yourself **softening**. Release your **jaw**.
Let the **shoulders** soften away from the shoulders.
On each exhale, **let go, let be**.

Become aware of the **inhale**.
On each inhale, feel a sense of **rejuvenation**.

On each exhale, **let go, let be**.
On each inhale, feel that **gentle sense of renewal**.
A certain **lightness of being**.

Continue like this for about a minute **on your own**.
On the exhale, **let go, let be**.
Making space.
On the inhale, feel the breath
bringing you new and nourishing energy.

Continue, on your own, with awareness.



Good job.
You were very still and very silent.
Bring a sense of completion
to your mini-meditation.
Now...
begin to **move the fingers**.
Rub the hands together, feeling the energy
between the palms.
Cup the hands gently over the eyes.
Gently release the hands and,
with a smile,
flutter you eyes open.

Take a moment to **notice how you feel**.

Thank you.
Thank you for taking time for you.