**Stillness - Stories & Illustrations**

**Human blood has three segments - plasma, white cells, and red cells. Our blood will settle into three layers if left in a test tube. Red blood cells, the most numerous cells of the body, will settle to the bottom; white blood cells, including lymphocytes, monocytes, eosinophils, basophils, neutrophils, and platelets, will form a thin white line of separation and a deep, yellowish, watery plasma will float on the top. (Tom Valentine, in Let's Live magazine)**

**The soft mass of the adult brain is motionless. Though it consumes up to 25% of the blood’s oxygen supply, it does not grow, divide or contract. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 320)***

**Admiral Richard E. Byrd, at Ross Barrier: He stood, that afternoon, looking out over the Barrier, feeling its beauty and its power. He listened to the stillness, filling that vast brooding space with mystery. He thought of the orderly swing of the planets in their orbit, the everlasting movement of the constellations across the sky, the steady rhythmic change of the seasons. And he thought how all these things went together, how they showed a master’s touch. *(Lillian Eichler Watson, in Light From Many Lamps, p. 33)***

**Reader writes: “The part of the car wheel that’s touching the pavement is not going backwards. It’s standing still.” *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The Arctic woolly bear is a caterpillar that lives 14 years. No other in said category lives that long. Sadly, though, the woolly bear remains frozen solid through most of its life. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**What causes a caterpillar to suddenly find a quiet place to hang upside down, spin a bunch of threads around itself, and wait quietly for some catastrophic change to occur? *(Rev. Richard Stratford)***

**In one of Edward Everett Hale's stories, he speaks of a little girl who, amidst her play with the butterflies and birds in a country place, used to run into a nearby chapel frequently to pray, and after praying always remained perfectly still a few minutes, “waiting,” she said, “to see if God wanted to say anything” to her. Children are often nearest the kingdom. (H. Emilie Cady, in Lessons in Truth)**

**Recently, a friend of mine told me about an elderly lady who had worked as cook for a family since she was a young woman. The lady of the house noticed that practically every day during the long summer months, after the noonday luncheon dishes had been washed and put away, Auntie Bea made her way to a chair in the back yard to sit with eyes closed, facing the sun. One day, becoming a little concerned, her employer walked out to her and asked, “Auntie Bea, are you asleep?” The little old lady raised her soft brown eyes and smiling contentedly said, “No, Ma'am, I'm just sittin’ here lettin’ God love me.” (Freda K. Routh, in Between Us)**

**President Calvin Coolidge once got this message delivered to Congress via a brief conversation he had with a senator. “Don’t you know four-fifths of all our troubles in this life would disappear if we would only sit down and keep still.” *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The eagle also can soar effortlessly for hours on rising thermals, without ever flapping its wings. Besides this ability to soar is a body that seems almost lighter than air. All its bones are hollow, and its entire skeleton weighs only half as much as the eagle's 7000 or so feathers. (Mark Walters, in Reader's Digest)**

**In Washington, D. C., a high-stress town, I stepped into an elevator on my way to the 11th floor. As the door shut, I discovered that all the indicator buttons were lit. Furious at the prospect of stopping on every floor, I suddenly noticed, taped to the door, a piece of paper with a short handwritten note. It said, “In the middle of this day full of pressure and haste, my gift to you is a fully justified four-minute break. So step back and enjoy a few moments of total peace.” With no other choice, I did just that as the elevator slowly made its way upward. When I got to my floor, I found myself amazingly refreshed. *(Joseph Belotte, In Reader’s Digest***

**One of the Spanish explorer s who sailed to the New World in the wake of Columbus was Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca. De Vaca shipwrecked along the Texas coast, an area inhabited by fierce Indians. Fearing for his life, de Vaca hid by burying himself in the earth, where he remained for several days amid a cold Texas winter. In this condition, he literally could do nothing. When he dug himself out he discovered that something utterly miraculous had occurred: he now had the power to heal. De Vaca then began a trek westward. As he walked, word of his healing powers spread ahead of him. Native Indians would bring their sick to him for healing, and he was thus able to pass through hostile territory unharmed. De Vaca's new ability was ushered in by a physical--and, we can presume, an emotional and spiritual--crisis. Buried alive, he could not do, he could only be. And out of this extreme state he was transformed. (Dr. Larry Dossey, in Unity magazine)**

**Some fish light up with a luminescence when they swim, but remain dark when still. An underwater photographer says schools of them hang motionless so they won’t be seen. But when spooked, they spread the depths with sudden light, creating a sort of deep sea fireworks. *(L. M. Boyd)*  
In early spring, if you're willing to plod through snow banks in northern woods, you just might get to watch a miracle unfold. As shallow ponds melt and then quickly freeze again, a tiny brown wood frog may get locked in the ice, just a few inches beneath the surface. Crouched as if contemplating a jump it will never get to make, the frog becomes frozen stiff. Its heart stops; its breathing ceases. But when the sun thaws the pond again, the frog can thaw, too. Ice melts in its body, its heartbeat returns, and its blood begins to circulate anew. The creature gulps for air and then, as if hours or days of suspended animation were just a small inconvenience, it hops away. (Wallace Ravven, in Discover magazine)**

**The anatomy of a frog is such that it must close its eyes to swallow, and if its mouth is held open too long it will suffocate.  *(E. C. McKenzie, in Tantalizing Facts)***

**It is a natural matter for the golden frogs of Panama to remain in the mating embrace for several months until the female lays her eggs. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Can you imagine the awe of the first New Zealanders who entered Waitomo Cave? Above them the ceiling shimmered with thousands of tiny, bluish-white lights that looked like sparkling stars in the night sky. Perhaps they gasped or called out to a companion. Any sound would have plunged the cave into darkness as if someone had pulled a switch. A cough, even a whisper, frightens these New Zealand glow-worms and causes them to turn off their lights at once. Guides caution the thousands of tourists who visit Waitomo today to keep still, or else they too may be left in the dark. *(Francine Jacobs, in Nature’s Light)***

**Your heart rests between beats. If you add up the length of time of these rests over a lifetime, you will find that your heart stands still for about twenty years. (Barbara Seuling)**

**Certain people in India are able to control their own heartbeats. They can actually make their hearts stop for short periods of time. *(Barbara Seuling)***

**The green-backed heron does not just stand there motionless at water's edge, waiting for fish. It often drops a single small feather on the water in front of it -- to bait said fish. (L. M. Boyd)**

**That heron called the American bittern has a curious defense. Walk close enough and it freezes, with neck and head stretched skyward as though to pretend it’s a cattail stalk. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The human body needs twenty-four hours without exercise every week in order to cleanse itself of lactic acid and other waste products from exercise. *(Noel Botham, in The World’s Greatest Book of Useless Information, p. 97)***

**The hurricane’s revolving heat engine is at its peak of deadly efficiency, sending out enormous energy like a monstrous natural turbine. At the vortex of this spinning wheel is the hurricane’s eye -- virtually still but with the highest temperatures and the lowest barometric pressure of all.  Inside this calm core, the hunter plane’s occupants often look up at a blue sky and down on a sea in turmoil from the surrounding winds. Sometimes there are birds swept into the center to circle around in their cage of clouds. *(A. B. C. Whipple)***

**The oldest known letter in Myrtle Fillmore's handwriting, dated September 7, 1891, says in part: “My dear, you ask why you do not enter into the understanding you so desire. I will tell you. You are already in it, but think you have some great thing to do to get there. The kingdom of God is within you! All you need to do is ‘Be still and know.’” (Unity Progress Newsletter)**

**If you want to lose weight, take up aerobatic flying. It’s one of the most grueling sports. The athlete doesn’t walk, run or jump -- just sits there. Yet said athlete can lose 5 to 10 pounds in one competitive event. When a pilot puts a plane through rolls, loops, spins, hammerheads and Immelmanns, the high-negative high-positive G forces are incredibly punishing. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Minnows use their sense of smell not only to identify the shock substance but to recognize their traditional enemy, the pike. When the small defenseless minnows catch an approaching pike’s odor, they do not attempt to flee. The pike is much faster and could catch them. Instead, the little fish become totally invisible and sink to the bottom of the water. The pike which is primarily sight-guided, reacts chiefly to the sight of motion, and so it passes by the minnows. *(Ruth Winter)***

**An entertainer named Micheline Bernard received more than 50,000 fan letters for a performance in which she didn't dance, sing or even recite lines. She just stood there. In 1946. Her assignment: to model the first bikini bathing suit. (L. M. Boyd)**

**The big surprise is that the moon had a fairly eventful life from 4.6 to 3.2 billion years ago -- and has since been still. *(Earl Ubell, in The Living World of Nature)*  
Our motto does not need be always, “Don't just stand there, do something.” Often it need be, “Don't just do something, stand there.” (Phil Barnhart, in Seasonings for Sermons, p. 114)**

**Muddy water let stand becomes clear. (Old Chinese saying)**

**The divers of ancient times who carried oil in their mouths to release beneath the surface when rough water made their work difficult were applying what every seaman today knows -- that oil appears to have a calming effect on the free waves of the open ocean. Instructions for the use of oil in emergencies at sea are carried by most official sailing directions of maritime nations. Oil has little effect on surf, however, once the dissolution of the wave form has begun. (Rachel L. Carson, in The Sea Around Us, p. 95)**

**Pain immobilizes us when we are injured so that healing can occur. *(Claudia Wallis, in Reader’s Digest)***

**The male penguin incubates the egg, resting it on top of his feet to protect it from the ice. He stands perfectly still, not even moving to eat. For he must conserve his body temperature to warm the egg 51 degrees C. warmer than the surrounding snowy wastes. *(James Wiley)***

**In the early days of photography, the long exposure time necessary for an adequate shot required the photographer to attach a head clamp to the person sitting for a portrait to prevent movement and a blurred image. The clamp did much to produce the rigid, artificial facial expressions typical of most early photo portraiture. *(Denver P. Tarle, in A Treasury of Trivia, p. 156***

**In photography’s pioneer days, sitting for a portrait called for extreme patience. Making a daguerreotype in 1837 required a fifteen-minute exposure. The subject’s head was put in a clamp to hold it still.  *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 172)***

**What you hope when you go by air is that your plane will stall--at the right time in the right place. The “stall” comes in every good landing. It's just before the wheels touchdown. (L. M. Boyd)**

**The surface of a pond is moved by wind, yet the bottom remains still; rivers run faster near the surface than they do near the bottom; water never moves of its own volition except when it descends. (Leonardo da Vinci)**

**In quicksand, a mule floats, a horse sinks. This has been seen a few times. Witnesses say the mule lies still and seems to relax, but the horse jumps hysterically until it goes under. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Quicksand is actually a mass of particles which are supported by rapidly circulating water. Quicksand can't suck you down because it is more dense than the human body, making it possible for a person to float in it. The easiest way to get out of quicksand is to remain still until you are floating, then slowly swim into a horizontal position and roll yourself onto firm ground. (Quentin Compson, in Amazing Facts & Trivia, p. 37)**

**A seal stops breathing when it goes to sleep, even on land. It wakes up every 15 minutes or so to catch its breath. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Sheep will not drink from running water. Hence the line in the Twenty-third Psalm: “He leadeth me beside the still waters.” (David Louis, in Fascinating Facts, p. 14)  
  
Did I tell you that “He leadeth me beside the still waters” alludes to the fact that sheep won’t drink from running streams. *(Boyd’s Curiosity Shop, p. 252)***

**Still sitting after all these years: David Dawson is a master of sitting still, said Ben Lake in the London Evening Standard. Every day for the past two and half years, Dawson has been sitting in the same position and spot for hours along with his whipper, Eli, as the painter Lucian Freud labors over his portrait. "I am naked, sitting upright on the wooden floor, with Eli by my side," says Dawson of his days, which begin at 8 a.m. and stretch into the afternoon. "It's quite a large work." Freud, 88, is a notoriously slow worker, but, for the most part, Dawson doesn't seem to mind. "Of course, there are days when you just feel, "Good God! Move on a bit faster!" he says. "But that's the way Lucian works, he keeps pushing a bit more every day and it slowly becomes more accomplished." Lest Freud slow things down ever more, he and Dawson seldom speak during their sittings. "I don't start talking ab out his paintings when he is in the middle of things. I know when to talk and when not to talk." Dawson, a painter himself, is enduring his ordeal solely for the experience of working with Freud. "I really do rate him as an amazing painter. That is what I am with every day. And it you're trying to up your game, it's a good thing." (*The Week magazine, March 18, 2011)***

**Even when you’re standing still, you’re actually traveling at incredibly high speeds. The earth is revolving at the speed of 1,000 miles per hour, and orbiting the sun at the speed of 66,700 miles per hour. *(Denver P. Tarle, in A Treasury of Trivia, p. 123)***

**We have been for some years unwilling hosts to a tribe of starlings. At least we think of them as a tribe. Isn't a flock more ethereal, gentler-mannered? They're back this year as usual, waiting for us to plant our garden, from which they'll cull the tenderest green lettuce and other goodies. I can truthfully say we have never had a kind thought about them -- until tonight. At suppertime we had a glorious double rainbow, with growly thunder for sound effects. And I saw what I couldn't have dreamed -- it was too improbable. As the rainbow brightened and defined, all the starlings flew from their favorite shed to the very tops of our maple trees and sat facing east, at attention. Maybe it was toward Jerusalem, or Mecca, but beyond doubt it was toward the rainbow. Every starling sat still and gazed. A little later, the rainbow vanished, and the starlings went back to their usual helter-skelter arrangement, chiefly on the shed. Not one in a treetop. And never before had I seen them there in the tops of the trees. They were simply using the treetops as the best seats for the evening's spectacle. (Ruth Camp, in Reader's Digest)  
How do most Hymenoptera decide: to sting or not to sting? Entomologist Roger Morse, of Cornell University, says that stinging insects are incensed by perfume, pomades, movement, dark-colored rough clothes and sweat. If you don't want to be stung at your next picnic, stay completely still and perfectly clean in your smooth, light clothes. (Mort La Brecque, in The Sciences)**

**I thought it was wonderful, and I signed up for the class. I worked at it very hard. I practiced it every day, and I went to class twice a week. I was really proud that I was getting stronger and was becoming very competent at tai chi. But there was one movement toward the end of the series of movements that, no matter how hard I tried, I just couldn’t master. I would come to the part where you stand on one foot, and then you kick out the other leg almost to shoulder height. I’d try to kick, and I’d fall over. I was sure I knew why this was happening -- it was because I wasn’t yet strong enough to do this kick. And then, one day, after three years of doing tai chi in the class, something different happened. As I came to the kick, suddenly it was as if time slowed down. I was aware of a still center in me that was absolutely trustworthy. As I began the kick, my body moved effortlessly around this center in a sort of natural balance. And for the first time in three years, I didn’t fall over. *(Rachel Noami Remen, in Unity magazine)***

**Tapioca comes from the root of the cassava plant, which grows in Brazil, West Africa and Malaysia. The juice of the root is bitter and poisonous but when it is left to settle a starchy substance forms at the bottom of the dish. When this starch is dried, it becomes pellets of tapioca, which is used for several purposes including making milk puddings. *(Simon Goodenough, in 1500 Fascinating Facts, p. 235)***

**A sniff of vanilla tends to calm you, evidently. At least, that’s reportedly what doctors at Sloan-Kettering in New York give some patients who have to lie still for long periods during diagnostic exams. Vanilla aroma is said to relax them. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**A little boy cherished his grandfather's pocket watch. At night he would keep it next to his bed, where the ticking would lull him to sleep. Every day he would take it with him to school and then afterwards to his father's lumberyard, where he would play each afternoon until it was time to go home. One day as he was running and jumping around some piles of wood scraps, he suddenly realized the watch was missing. He searched frantically among the bits of lumber but had no luck in locating his beloved timepiece.He felt awful about it and, sitting down upon the heap of strewn wood, he began to cry. After remaining for some time with his tears and his despair, an idea popped into his head. “If I sit very still and don't make a sound, I will hear the watch,” he realized. “I'll find it because I will hear it ticking!” His sobbing stopped, and as he sat completely still, the tick...tick...ticking of the watch announced its location a few feet away under a pile of wood. (Richard & Mary-Alice Jafolla, in Unity magazine)**

**Perfectly still water can be lowered to temperatures several degrees lower than the freezing point (32 degrees F., 0 degrees C.) and remain liquid. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 130)***

**A walking man looks taller than the same man standing still. So reports a wax museum operator.  He makes his immobile wax figures one-half inch taller than their real-life models. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**A few years ago, National Geographic featured an amazing photograph of a beluga whale stranded on pebbles in inch-deep water off Canada’s Somerset Island. What was striking about this picture was that the white whale was calm as can be. The writer gave two explanations for the beluga’s composure. First, it didn’t want to make sounds that would attract hungry polar bears. Second, it knew from experience that in a few hours the high tide would return and restore its freedom. When we are in helpless predicaments, few of us remain as calm as the beluga. Dismay grows; panic sets in. We impulsively do things that make matters worse. (Lester Seto, in Portals of Prayer)**

**A whale’s heart beats only nine times a minute. *(David Louis, in Fascinating Facts, p. 13)***

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