

from the opening chapter in *The Call*

This is a story about surrendering from a woman who has found surrender impossible. This is a story about stopping the war, my war, the one I have fought all my life, the one I have not been able to give up despite the fact that I have lost every battle and sincerely declared myself out of action over and over again. It's a story about stopping the war with what is within and around me because I have simply had enough of fighting, because I love my life and the world and have come to realize that in order to find the rest I ache for and the peace I want us to create together, I must give up the war I fight every time I allow my desire to create change, inner or outer, pull me into doing. Change will happen, change does happen, often as a result of our choices and our actions. But every time I let my actions be dictated solely or primarily by the desire to create change, every time I am attached to achieving a desired result, no matter how lofty or "spiritual" that hoped-for result may be, I am rejecting what is and so causing suffering in myself and in the world.

I thought that to heed the call, to know and embody the meaning of my life, I had to learn to do it differently. But what I had to learn, what I am still learning, was to stop doing altogether. I had to learn not-doing, something I had heard about years ago but dismissed as being at best an ideal beyond my humanness or at worst empty spiritual jargon. I remember the first time I heard a teacher, a Native American elder, tell a group of students that they had to learn the art of not-doing. I was a single mother with two small sons living on very little income, and I wondered just how not-doing would work when there are children to get up and dressed, breakfasts to prepare, lunches to pack, laundry to do, and a wage to be earned. I misunderstood. I assumed not-doing meant doing nothing—staring at a wall or sleeping—and there was precious little time for this in my life. Of course, even when we sit and stare at a wall or lie in bed sleeping we are usually doing something. We are thinking and feeling and sensing, if only in our dreams.

But not-doing does not depend on whether or not my body is moving or my mind is active. Not-doing is about letting any movement flow from an awareness of the deep and ever-present stillness that is what I am at the most essential level of being. It is here, in the awareness of my essential nature, that I find the meaning I seek in my life, not as an idea or an ideal but as an implicit knowing folded into my very being.

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