

The Serenity Passport: Journey to Calm with 30 Words from around the World

Megan C. Hayes

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Megan C. Hayes's *The Serenity Passport* celebrates the simple, fun, and often quirky ways that people in cultures across the globe carve out peaceful, centered spaces for themselves.

Making untranslatable words and concepts understandable, the book brings the flavors of faraway lands to practices and activities designed to enhance peacefulness, happiness, and bonding. Some of the practices are surprising: who knew that instead of happy hours and wild Friday club nights, many Swedes prefer Fredagsmys, a cozy night at home to snuggle and eat tacos while watching crime dramas on television? Or that the Dutch actually like to practice Voorpret, the joy of anticipation.

Hayes describes activities—some exuberant, others thoughtful—designed to deepen well-being and human connection. The Chinese practice of Shu, for example, brings the Confucian virtue of compassion and care for others to life by making their needs and desires the object of focus, while in Hebrew, a mitzvah is a good deed or kind act done for someone without expecting a return, and that's life-enhancing for the giver and the receiver.

Hayes's engaging, warm, and humble work shows that a warm bath, going outdoors with friends to have a beer and celebrate the end of a long winter, or immersing in the essence of a forest can become transformative. Brief vignettes reveal the meaning and background behind each practice, resulting in a passport to intimate knowledge that tourists in foreign lands don't often get to experience and that, as all good travel does, piques the desire to know more. The ultimate revelation is that people all over the world cherish many of the same things: peace, happiness, connection with nature, and sharing with family and friends.

The Serenity Passport is an inspiring cross cultural consideration of what really matters.

KRISTINE MORRIS (November / December 2019)

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