

# Neighbourly 'Sounds'

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

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You would be lucky person if you have not had to bear with 'sounds' coming through the wall. It might be sound of the base line pounding though the wall paper or the periodic flush or the muffled conversation of the TV or loud conversation. No doubt, you have your own way of managing such a situation. If not, here are some tips that might help. The first is to become aware of the aversion. And how aversion makes the ears glue themselves to the wall. Then to remind oneself that this is suffering, not the sounds. It is aversion that labels them as noise. It may also help to recall when we have been neighbourly nuisances. It will cool our righteousness. Then – and this is the hard bit - always start with accepting the situation as it is. 'This is the way it is'. Keep repeating it gently in the heart until the heart lets go of, 'This is not the way it ought to be.' You may find the suffering disappears with the aversion. Then ask, 'What can I do about the situation?' If there is something you can do, of course, do it. If not, just get on with what I have you have do, as best you can. And as the aversion keeps raising its snarl, repeat the exercise. It's surprising how the mind can blanket out sounds once it has accepted them as normal audial back ground. When I was a student we rented a house right next to a rail line. The house shook with every passing. After a day or so, it never woke me up. But then the beer might have helped! Every time I returned to the east I had to used to all the sounds. At Kanduboda it was the squirrels and other wild animals. In Yangon, it was the traffic and the dogs. Two or three days down the line, and I didn't 'hear' it. But if it truly becomes invasive, then we can approach the neighbour and we will always get a better result if we are calm and equanimous, if we explain why the sounds are disturbing. Throw it gently back to them, 'I'm sure you wouldn't like it either if I played loud music'. Hopefully it works. I had a neighbour who played Elvis – a lot. I was trying to prepare work for my classes. I gave up, mainly because I like Elvis and couldn't stop myself singing! I asked her to turn it down a bit. She bellowed, 'I pay my rates'. I answered so did I, but it didn't include an Elvis disco. She did turn it down – after explaining and appealing to her better nature. I was lucky. If the situation becomes unbearable (and there are such situations, especially if the sounds interrupt sleep), then it is best to make a long term strategy to move away, put it out there as an aspiration and work gently towards it. May your neighbours be quiet, gentle and peace-loving!

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