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Savouring

Or savoring if you're from North America!

Consciously 'tasting' sound allows you to be more discerning about how it's affecting you, and, over time, to change your soundscape making it more positive and health-enhancing.

Start by exploring the sounds in your home. Sit quietly in each room and listen carefully and consciously. You will discover many small sounds you may never have noticed before. The more constant ones all combine to create a 'noise floor' in each room, and any intermittent sound that happens in that room occurs on top of that noise floor. Buzzes and hums may come from electrical or electronic equipment such as fridges, heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC), computer fans, coffee machines, dishwashers, cookers, washing machines and tumble dryers. Hisses and gurgles may come from boilers, water pipes or HVAC.

You may be surprised how many sounds there are that you never noticed before. Some of them may be pleasant or reassuring for you; others are just noise and may be able to be silenced or tamed. If you're buying new equipment, be sure to check the noise output; for white goods, this is often on



the information label these days. At The Sound Agency we recommend a maximum of 40 dB at one metre for any piece of equipment. I recommend the same for your home.

Don't forget to notice interesting or pleasing sounds in your home too. In my TED talk on conscious listening, I played the sound of a slightly faulty tumble dryer I used to own; its rotating drum had a characteristic sound in waltz time. I used to find that pleasing, and indeed, once when I appeared on a US radio show a small orchestra played a piece of Mozart to accompany a recording of my tumble dryer, which made it even more pleasing for me as a sound from then on. Sadly, that machine is no more. In the TED talk I also played a beautiful recording of a kettle boiling, which is actually a rich and fascinating sound.

After working through your home, tackle all the other environments in which you spend a lot of time: your work place, your car or transport, your hobby locations... in some cases, you will have control and can improve them; in others, like public transport, you have little control and have to adopt the MBA strategy we learned in the AGENTS discussion of noise in chapter four. In all cases, be in an active enquiry by asking: "How can I improve my experience here?"