

A Letter from IMS's Teachers

Dear Friend,

Thank you for your interest in attending our Three-Month Retreat. As you know, this course is a special time for practice. It is a rare opportunity to deepen the powers of concentration, wisdom and compassion.

Based on the meditation instructions of Mahasi Sayadaw and supplemented by a range of skillful means, the course will encourage a balanced attitude of relaxation, alertness, and continuity of mindfulness based on the Buddha's teaching of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness as outlined in the Satipatthana Sutta. In addition, meditations on the four Brahma Viharas (lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity) will be offered throughout the retreat, & optional Mindful Movement will be offered once or twice a week.

Ongoing guidance for all participants will include daily evening discourses, guided Brahma Vihara meditations twice a week, and regular opportunities for questions about practice. In addition, every meditator will be assigned to a pair of teachers; you will then alternate individual meetings with these two teachers every two or three days.

Noble silence is a powerful component of your retreat. We ask that you refrain from visual, verbal and written communication with each other. This helps cultivate the precious gifts of refuge and solitude, even while practicing with up to 100 others. We encourage you to be mindful of sound – to take care with the noise of movement, opening and closing doors, mealtimes and all other general activities.

From our many years of experience, both in practice and in teaching, we have found reading, writing, receiving and sending mail, making phone calls, sending texts, etc to be great hindrances to the continuity of mindfulness necessary for deepening insight. In support of Noble Silence, we ask that you not engage in these activities, except in an emergency. As well, you will be expected to refrain from using cell phones and electronic devices, and we will be strongly encouraging everyone to turn in any devices, such as cell phones, tablets & computers, to the front office at the start of the retreat. Prior to your arrival at IMS, please arrange for someone outside the retreat to handle any necessary communications on your behalf.

Since intensive meditation practice can be a powerful (and, at times, stressful) experience, especially in a setting that is removed from your normal support system, it is essential that you have a clear understanding of what will be expected of you. It is also important that we have as clear a background as possible for each person attending so that we can offer the most supportive guidance for each individual. This is why completion of the Retreatant Questionnaire is a necessary part of the registration process for this retreat. To support your practice, and for your own well being, it is essential that you be honest & forthcoming as you complete this questionnaire. If, upon reflection you realize that you have omitted something important from the Questionnaire, please contact the IMS registrar right away, or speak to someone in the Front Office upon arrival.

The information you give us will help assure that your time here will be as beneficial to you as possible; it is kept strictly private, and will be destroyed at the end of the course.

We ask that you carefully read this information to help you prepare. Again, we appreciate your interest and welcome your participation in this unique opportunity to deepen your understanding of the dharma.

Sincerely,
The Core Teachers of the Three-Month Retreat