

## **PREPARATION AND SETTING INTENTIONS**

***Welcome to our online retreat!***

***We look forward to practicing with you. To make the most of this precious opportunity, we encourage you to read these suggestions and reflections, on how to prepare for a home retreat on Zoom.***

If you are not familiar with Zoom, you can get support with learning how to use it via the link below. We suggest you do this before the retreat starts. <https://gaiahouse.co.uk/using-zoom/>

The creation of a retreat and an online dharma community is something that we do together: here are some guidelines and suggestions:

### **Outer Preparation**

Take some care to prepare your space so you have a supportive environment. This may include:

- tidying up your room,
- setting up a place for sitting meditation,
- getting plenty of food in and maybe planning your menus,
- bringing in some flowers and a candle for a simple altar, as a reminder of this being a sacred space,
- making agreements and arrangements with family and loved ones that feel good for everyone,
- setting an away message so you do not need to answer emails/phone calls etc

The more care you give to your setting and your preparations the more you will feel supported in your journey of meditative deepening, and opening during the retreat. Our experience is also that a retreat at home is a rich opportunity in which we can cultivate new ways of being with and relating to everyday activities and those other beings with whom we share our life.

Do what you need to do so that so far as possible you can be on retreat. Put aside whatever you can comfortably let go of. And there will be practical things we may need to attend to such as cooking or speaking to other people. Include these natural aspects of life as part of your retreat, not something to rush through, nor relate to as an interruption or distraction. Do what needs to be done with care and wholehearted attention. Try to make sure that your loved ones feel that things are working well for them too.

### **Inner Preparation**

Having cared for your space and the practical resources needed for the retreat, it can be very helpful to make an inner commitment; *this is*

*what I will be doing during this week.* Inviting and reminding yourself to be wholehearted and steadfast in your retreat. Making clear intentions and so far as you can a plan, for how you will engage with this retreat time. Reflect upon what feels possible and what you feel called to, and decide to what degree you will seek to keep silence or engage with those you live with, and whether you will practice ongoing formal meditation through the day or include other activities.

Engage your heart and connect with what you love and care deeply about. You are giving yourself this gift of time and space to be, to open, to explore and to awaken more fully as a human being.

### **Meeting Online**

Our online dharma hall is the shared heart and holding space and of our retreat.

- Arrange your computer or device so you can see and hear well.
- Make sure you have easy access to the schedule and Zoom links and arrive on time for all the sessions you can attend.
- It is very supportive if you can arrive 5 minutes before the start of the meeting to settle in. We also ask you to stay for the duration of the meeting if at all possible.
- Please mute your microphones but do have your video on. We support each other in being present and visible. It is generally for helpful sound quality if you use headphones.
- Should you need to move around or step away from the screen, please turn off your video. This supports a more settled collective space.
- Likewise, if another being (person or pet) comes into your space and engages with you, just turn off your video, and turn it back on when things have settled again.
- Meetings run for up to 90 minutes. Please feel free to move and stretch if you need to.
- The talks, guided meditations, and instructions will be recorded and made available online, but not the Q&As.
- If you have to miss any teaching sessions, please check the webpage/noticeboard to access recordings of these sessions.

Some of us are by now quite familiar with practicing using Zoom, for others of us this will be a new experience. Everyone is welcome and we will all be learning as we go along. We will find our way with this and whatever happens we can make it part of our practice.

**We wish you an enjoyable and fruitful retreat.**

**May our practice be for our own deep wellbeing, and for the welfare of all beings!**