

## ***HOW DOES AN ONLINE RETREAT WORK?***

Retreat is especially useful in strengthening practice capacity. The combination of a dedicated practice period, increased meditation and continuity of mindfulness provide the ideal conditions for greater understanding and wisdom. The container provides a safe environment in which to reflect upon the greater implications of having a regular meditation practice in our lives and the possibility of developing a natural inquiring mind. Unfortunately, the current health crisis prevents us from attending residential retreat centers.

The wider Insight meditation community began offering online retreats in April 2020. The retreat format can vary widely depending upon the teaching style of the organization offering the retreat or the teachers involved. They are all designed, however, to offer the dedicated time of a retreat within the context of our normal lives, allowing retreatants to work and sleep at home. We come together as a sangha to sit and contemplate the Dhamma. Just like a residential retreat, retreatants are asked to commit to the entire retreat. This builds continuity and momentum of practice.

The unique container for online retreats is one in which all experiences are included in the field of awareness. It centers around a recognition that Dharma can be realized under all conditions and in all situations. What is necessary is to understand and cultivate wise view and wise intention in one's meditation practice. With wise view and wise intention, it becomes possible to find a way to relate to all situations as material for liberation. Cultivation of wise view and wise intention comes from how we hold and live within the refuges and precepts. The refuges represent the bell to remind us to return again and again to practice. The precepts represent the environment (or container) we create to practice within. During online retreats, we expand the breath of both the refuges and each precept in an effort to support wise view, wise intention, continuity of mindfulness and your practice commitment.