

Preparing for the Retreat

1. Setting up your Retreat Space

- If at all possible, set up a dedicated space for the retreat where you have internet access.
- Find a place for walking meditation. This might include walking around the block or in a hallway or larger room. It is preferable not to have to navigate street crossings or traffic.
- Print this document and the retreat schedule prior to the retreat to keep them handy.

2. Electronic Media

- We will be using the Zoom video-conferencing and a landing webpage which will be on the Spirit Rock website for our retreat. Details about how to use Zoom will be covered before the retreat begins. To support yourself and the group we ask that you close all programs except Zoom and turn off all of notifications on your devices. If you need help with this, please let us know.
- Set up auto-reply for email and phone as if you were out of town.

3. Meals

- If possible, do all of your food shopping before the retreat begins.
- Keep the meals simple, perhaps pre-preparing some food that can be eaten throughout the week. Example: a large pot of soup for dinners.
- Consider writing a meal plan so you do not have to decide what to prepare for each meal.

4. Navigating housemates, spouses, partners, and children in the home who are not on retreat

Have a conversation about your retreat time. Here are some things you might want to cover:

- Acknowledge that it will most likely feel awkward and strange at first, but a rhythm can develop that can work for everyone.
- Talk about noble silence and see if you can get support in being in noble silence for the duration of the retreat. If necessary, you might want to discuss a specific time of the day to connect verbally so that the communication is contained.
- If possible, ask for support in having a quieter overall living space. Ask people to use earbuds or headphones or at least keep the volume low in a separate room. If it is not possible to get support for this, consider how to incorporate this into your practice.
- Post your retreat schedule.
- It may work better for you to switch a sit time with a meal time to limit interactions in the kitchen.
Suggestions for if you have children
- If they are old enough, talk with your kids about what you are doing and ask their input for how to create a supportive environment. Enlist them as allies.
- Feel free to ask the Teachers about your specific situation.

Navigating those you live with will be part of the retreat and we will be checking in about how this is going during the retreat. Don't worry if it gets weird and challenging. We will learn together how to turn toward such challenges with our practice.

During the Retreat

1. Online Format & Etiquette

- As was mentioned earlier, we will be gathering for group sits, dharma talks, practice discussions, Q&A, using Zoom Video-conferencing. Links to Zoom for all gatherings will be sent to you once you

have RSVP'd and have committed to doing this retreat. **PLEASE DO NOT GIVE OUT THE ZOOM LINK TO OTHER PEOPLE.** This is a retreat centered around our community and sharing the link with others would disrupt this.

- It is helpful for creating community to allow your video to be on during the meetings. It can also help navigate some of the disconnection that can come with using an online format.
- **Please don't multitask while online with our community.** Engage as fully as you would if we were in person.
- Everyone will be muted when entering or exiting the rooms to cut down on feedback and extraneous sounds. Instructions for unmuting during Q&A and practice discussions will be provided.
- Please refrain from moving your laptop / tablet / phone around with the video camera on. This helps bring a quality of settledness to our online community.
- While on zoom, please don't move around. Keep your phone or computer stationary to minimize distraction for others.

2. Media, phones, and other technology

As with our in-person retreats, one of the requirements for this online retreat is to refrain from using electronic devices for anything other than connecting through the Zoom Video-conferencing.

One of the transformative things that can come from home retreats is having time in your own living space in which you are not engaging in other technology and media. This alone is helpful in touching a different way of being in your life.

3. Commitment to Practice

Self-discipline – One of the challenges of home practice is getting swept away and forgetting about formal practice. This is a normal challenge to have. It is very helpful if you can be open and honest about this so we can address it.

4. Set Your Intention

When you begin the retreat, take a few minutes to consider what is calling you to this time of deepening practice. It may be to do this retreat for the benefit of yourself and those around you. It may be to undertake this retreat to deepen your presence, steadiness and compassion in difficult times. It may be to release your fears and become more loving, to contribute more to our world.... If you wish, you can light a candle or place a flower or inspiring image near you. Quiet yourself and inwardly create a strong and clear intention. Once you set your intention, you can recite it in your mind or write it down on a notecard and place it by the candle or image. Regularly during the days of your retreat, remember and reaffirm this intention.

5. Welcome Whatever Arises

Anytime you meditate, especially for longer periods, difficult energies will naturally arise. Worry, restlessness, sleepiness, frustration, irritation, doubt are among the most common. Repeating thought patterns and unfinished business of the heart will also arise. These offer some of the very best opportunities for your meditation to deepen, and your wisdom and love to grow. Receiving these with mindful loving awareness and adding compassion for self and others, you can begin to trust your skill of mindfulness and your good heart to hold it all.

Remember, we will be doing this together. We hope you will be supported by the shared intention among the participants. The teachers will dedicate their efforts to supporting you and your practice. We're delighted you're here.