

An at Home IMS Retreat: A Guided Self Retreat with Bart Van Melik, DaRa Williams, Walt Opie, nakawe cuebas

Suggestions for Creating A Home Retreat:

Different conditions for home retreat may exist:

Living alone

Living with others - family, friends, children, elders, pets, roommates

Living in a freestanding home, in an apartment

Street noise

Urban, suburban, rural.

Being a member of a vulnerable population or living with someone who is.

Limited Capacity and/or resources

The intention of this retreat is to support you in taking a pause and making space to take care of yourself. It is also an opportunity to engage self compassion with kindness in whatever conditions and circumstances exist at home and in life.

We cannot be well or help others if we are in a shaky place without grounding and being present. Can we make space and time to nourish our own center and find balance and equanimity with the changing conditions of life we are presently facing. Where does one go for refuge during this time? How do we create possibility and opportunity and even open to moments of joy and gratitude?

Compassion asks the questions, "How can I help myself, how can I help others?" Knowing that we are self isolating for our own welfare and for the welfare of other beings, as an act of compassion for global suffering of all beings, animals, mother earth. We are all suffering during this time of history. Reflecting this way during these days takes us out of our self absorption and widens our boundless heart to radiate out to the entire planet and the universe.

How do we cultivate self compassion:

This may look different for each of us e.g. a daily walk, being with nature as healer, eating healthy, sufficient hydration, daily exercise, tub soaks, herbal teas to aid relaxation, meditating, journaling, electronic/technology breaks - not checking emails or limiting time spent with news programs, TV's, radios, avoiding unnecessary conversation, connecting with community etc.

First and foremost, we recommend making an intention to keep practicing continuous mindfulness, slow and steady throughout your days as **much as possible practicing embodied presence** in all activities, including: cooking, cleaning, bathing, brushing teeth, caring for others, mindful speech, etc. when you get lost in auto pilot, come back to your intention. See if you can let go of unnecessary busyness and practice being and not doing. Noticing the restlessness, anxiety, breathing into those mind states and letting go.

You can also use the acronym **R.A.I.N**:

R = recognize what mind state is present, name it.

A = accept that this mind state is present without judgement.

I = investigate how the mind state feels in the body, mind and heart, learn more about it

N = no self, do not personalize, making a self out of it "I am an anxious person." Then let go...

PAUSE: taking pauses throughout the day especially when changing activity, stopping, taking a breath, relaxing, checking in to see "How is our body/mind/heart doing? What's present in this moment?" Coming back to your intention for retreat.

If living with others or in noisier environments sound meditation might be the way to go. Just allowing sounds to arise and pass, without judging, pushing away.

This is a "suggested" schedule to help you come up with the structure you may need. You can use whatever flexibility you may need depending on conditions at home.

Using flexibility with our sitting as to what's needed. First making an intention at the beginning of the sit, "may this sit be for my welfare and the welfare of all beings" (use whatever words work for you). Then grounding in the body, engaging breathe awareness or sound, contemplation of the dharma. A poem, or a piece of music as a way to enter in. Remember for the entire sit to lean into the anchor, home base. Practicing metta, compassion, equanimity, mudita; radiating phrases as part of your practice above, below, in front and behind, perhaps during walking can be quite supportive especially in challenging times.

Please hear that this is just one template for a retreat day. Feel free to alter as the conditions and demands of your life at home require. It may be that you just get to do an hr in the morning, an hour in the afternoon and an hour in the evening. Whatever schedule supports you and does not add stress. Relax! Also, as Nakawe suggested, perhaps it is that one or two aspects of practice you can commit to every day and then having the flexibility and creativity to add in other components may be useful.

Schedule:

7:30 am -- wake up

8:00 am -- sitting

8:30 am -- breakfast

9:00 am -- walking

9:30 am -- sitting

10:15 am -- walking/movement (recorded)

10:30 am -- sitting

11:15 am -- walking

11:45 am -- sitting

12:30 pm -- lunch

3:00 pm -- sitting

3:45 pm -- walking

4:15 pm -- dharma talk

5:00 pm -- walking

5:30 pm -- sitting

6:00 pm -- dinner/tea

7:30 pm -- sitting

8:00 pm -- walking

8:30 pm -- sitting

9:00 pm -- chanting/practice or sleep

Resources:

Gil Fronsdal's Introduction to Meditation Course Instructions (for newer meditators):

https://www.audiodharma.org/series/1/talk/1762/?fbclid=IwAR3EYbawdz3mjKdt-IFoO9yx562rlmNllsVgDMwGBSIEkqwc_oqofO_7ZVs

Sedaka Sutta: This is the sutta Nakawe referred to about the 2 acrobats and importance of cultivating a strong mindfulness practice in our lives for our protection and protection of others. Compassion asks the questions, "How can I help myself, how can I help others?"

<https://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn47/sn47.019.olen.html>

Sallatha Sutta (The Arrow Sutta): When shot by the arrow of physical/mental pain, an unwise person makes matters worse by piling mental anguish on top of it, just as if he had been shot by two arrows. A wise person feels the sting of one arrow alone.

https://www.dhammadata.org/suttas/SN/SN36_6.html

The Five Daily Recollections: How easy we fall into a trance of thinking, planning, judging, fearing ... Remembering that everything changes helps us to celebrate what is here. These five recollections were recommended by the Buddha as daily reflections.

<https://www.lionsroar.com/buddhism-by-the-numbers-the-five-recollections/>

metta/ Compassion phrases: make up your own that works for you:

May I (we) be free from fear and danger, sorrow and pain

May I (we) find peace

May I (we) find understanding and peace, May I (we) find the way to healing

And below our beloved South African Freedom Fighter ancestor giving us inspiration:



Nelson Mandela

In isolation for 27 years.

No family, luxuries, phone.

Just hope and a vision.

We can do this...