

RULES AND GUIDELINES

VIPASSANA MEDITATION RETREAT

10 DAYS

1. Participation

The Vipassana meditation course is open to all people from different religions or nationalities, regardless of social condition, gender or any political view.

The only request made to people willing to participate is that they shall comply with this set of rules and guidelines described in this booklet, including the daily Schedule and make an honest and constant effort through all the 10 days to learn the meditation techniques.

Even though the course is free of charge, it is expected from all beneficiaries a true commitment to the learning process with a positive and proactive attitude abiding by the rules and guidelines expressed in the following pages. At the end of the retreat, those who feel like giving a donation, will be able to do it according to their own possibilities.

2. Content

This particular meditation course has been developed base on the experiences and research conducted by a group of meditators in a span of 4 years, testing and improving the vipassana meditation technique as well as the learning methods to achieve better results in a 10 day course, a 20 day course and a 30 day course, using the combination of several teaching methodologies (mainly as taught by S.N. Goenka in India, as taught by Sadayaw U. Pandita – Mahasi Tradition and the metta meditation technique as taught by Tich Thach Nhat) followed by the revelation of the Self or Spiritual Heart in the 9th day of the retreat.

This meditation retreat has been organized for the participants to achieve optimum results in 10 days, assuming that they follow all the instructions given by the facilitators with effort and continuity of the practice.

This retreat starts with a concentration exercise called “Anapana”, focusing with the attention to the nostrils observing the air coming in and going out while we breath. We do this practice seated with closed eyes and we combine it with walking meditation when we are outside the meditation hall. This initial practice if done constantly throughout the day, will initiate a natural healing or purification process which will be experienced in the following days. Every day, we have a talk in the evenings to explain what happens every day, how the techniques should be practiced and all-important information to make sure that participants know why things are done in a certain way.

Later on the 4th day, after preparing well the mind, beneficiaries start with the vipassana meditation technique which takes about 4 days to learn the basics of this meditation technique. Here, a second purification or healing stage initiates which is deeper than the previous one. The participants learn the different phases of the meditation in a way which they can advance faster in a meditation session, learning the balancing factors and going around the obstacles that may come in the first half hour of a meditation session.

During this phase, we use a lot of the knowledge taught in the Mahasi tradition to make sure all participants really understand how the mind works and what are the subconscious resistance it may manifest and learn how to overcome this problem which delays meditators in their deepening process. This way, new meditators advance much faster in their learning process and can experience more benefits in just a few days.

The first 4 days, the mind is trained and prepared for vipassana meditation, then, for the following 4 days participants do vipassana meditation to prepare themselves to practice Metta, a meditation technique focused on love and compassion which triggers the next meditation phase which is the Spiritual Heart based meditation and thus, participants experience a third stage of purification or healing which is a more complex process beyond the ordinary mind.

Beneficiaries of this 10 days course go through a very intensive training, composed of different techniques of meditation, all of them organized in a way that each support the other and together make a very unique learning experience, proven by many people to be extremely effective. Of course, provided that the participant follows the guidelines and rules explained here and given by the facilitators.

3. Requirements to participate

To participate in this course, you must send a registration form to evaluate your situation and expectations. After that, you will receive an email with a response to your request. On those cases that we are full, we will put you on the waiting list and will tell you what number you are in the waiting list to know if you have or don't have much chance of getting into the course at the last minute.

To participate, the following is required:

- a) To be absolutely available for the duration of the course which is the 10 days which starts on a Friday afternoon which is before day 1 and ends in the morning on a Monday, which is day 10th.
- b) All participants shall be in physical condition to move themselves from the dorms to the meditation hall and to the dining hall. In those cases which is required a wheelchair, will have to contact one of the organizers to evaluate the case and determine if it will be possible to participate.

- c) Participants should bring a meditation pillow to sit and something to cover themselves if they feel cold during the meditation sessions. Blankets provided by the retreat center are not allowed to be used in the meditation hall.
- d) Participants should also bring toothbrush, toothpaste, soft tissue and a towel.
- e) Will not be allowed the use of cell phones or any other electronic device during the retreat. Also, is not allowed to read or write if it is the first retreat. These items will be stored for them and returned in the 9th day.
- f) Participants doing a second or more retreat must bring a notebook and a pen to take notes. They will be given specific tasks and daily homework on the meditation techniques.
- g) All participants will need to bring clean clothes to change during the 10 days of the retreat. There is no laundry service at the retreat place. Consider that if you wash your clothes in the bathroom, the weather conditions may not be favorable to dry your clothes.
- h) All participants will need to provide an ID or passport to identify themselves. A photocopy of your passport or ID card will be requested.
- i) Participants that are taking medicines, will need to bring their medical prescription and will continue with their normal intake during the retreat. It's important to know what medicines are taking to give additional meditation instructions if required.
- j) Those participants with a diabetes condition, will have special care during the retreat to ensure they maintain normal levels of insulin. Will not be a problem for them to participate in the 10 days retreat.
- k) It is required that all participants come with a positive attitude and with a strong determination to start and finish the retreat. To really obtain benefits, participants who attend the first time to such retreat, must stay the 10 days. For that reason, we don't accept people who want to stay only for a few days.
- l) The minimum age to participate is 18 years old. Younger people, 14 years old or older, may participate with the company of an adult of the same gender who will be taking care of him/her. Please, contact the organizers in advance to first asses if the teenager really wants to participate and make logistical arrangements.
- m) Each participant, when registering, will sign a n agreement of participation in which commits to follow the rules set for this retreat, expressed in this document.

4. Basic general rules

During the meditation course, participants will have to comply with:

- a) Do not kill any animal or insects.
- b) Do not steal or take things from others without permission.
- c) Do not have sexual relationships of any type.
- d) Do not lie or provide false testimony.
- e) Do not consume drugs or stimulants of any kind.
- f) Do not wear jewelry, colorful and/or noisy clothing.

- g) Do not use mobile phones, radios, computers, tablets, ipods or any other electronic device.
- h) Do not consume candies, chewing gum or any other food in the meditation hall and dorms.
- i) Do not read newspapers, magazines, brochures or books of any kind.
- j) Do not listen to news or music on the radio or any other device.
- k) Do not sing or talk out loud with anyone. Use notes for your requests.
- l) Do not take notes, write letters or anything. (Except participants who already attended previous courses, which will have additional tasks assigned to them).

5. The meditation technique and the instructor

All participants will be learning several meditation techniques which require attention to detail and to follow carefully at the designated times the instructions provided.

It is important for the participant to be willing to carefully follow the instructions in order to learn properly the technique. Many people already have some knowledge about some types of meditations and tend to assume certain details of the meditation technique which will delay the proper understanding of the real technique. Therefore, even for experienced meditators, it is recommended to start the retreat as if didn't know anything before, to engage in a process of unlearning and relearning again.

The instructor or facilitator will provide the basic instructions on how to start practicing the technique but will not be able to meditate for the participant. Each participant has to be conscious that there is a process of learning and building the knowledge and experience on an ongoing basis during the practice.

The facilitators don't have any magical powers, they are ordinary people that has acquired many years of meditation experience and is willing to transfer this knowledge to you in the retreat.

After you finish the retreat, you will have understood that you are your own teacher, who follows the instructions, then evaluates, questions the validity of his/her experience, practice again, reevaluates and like that starts to build the meditation practice, based on his/her own experience.

The instructor will be available for questions every day at noon and at night after finishing the meditation sessions, before going to sleep. The instructor will be coaching each participant in their meditation progress, focused only on the technique and how participants could implement it.

This 10-day course is based on practical knowledge and will not cover any philosophy. We will be studying the breath, the mind, and the interaction of both.

Participants who already complete one or more 10-day retreats before and are practicing daily, will take notes every day, as they will have specific homework tasks to do in order to learn more complex aspects about the meditation.

6. Volunteers

During the retreat, there are volunteers helping with the organization and logistics of the course. These volunteers are organized to help you achieve your goal which is to learn the meditation technique with maximum results in 10 days.

Volunteers already know the benefits they get by following the rules. These rules are for you to create the best conditions to support a faster learning experience.

Please, be friendly and respectful as they are giving their time for you to benefit in this retreat. They are ready to help you in any situation. There will be pieces of paper and pencil to write down your request and hand over to volunteers. Depending on each request, it will take some time to provide you with your request.

7. Other meditation techniques, rituals and practices.

It is forbidden other practices and rituals for the duration of the retreat. Each participant must fully focus on the techniques provided and must practice them at the designated times.

If participants practice other things, will lose the momentum or energy required to go deeper into oneself. The retreat is organized in such a way that each participant starts gaining energy every day to prepare themselves for the following stage which requires more will and a sharper mind. If the energy gets dissipated or diverted into other activities, there would not be a distinct awareness of the benefits and the participant will not be able to go deeper into the meditation.

Only is allowed a minimum physical activity to stretch the body in order to be more relaxed in the sitting posture while meditating.

At the end of the retreat, many people who restart their own practices will notice also some benefits in those practices.

8. Interviews with the Instructor

Every participant has his/her own learning speed, thus the instructor will help them to increase that learning rate by monitoring every 2 days the advancement of each one. For this, there are compulsory interviews to which each participant has to attend and will review the technique with the instructor and it will be responded any doubt that the participant may have.

Of course, participants that require to meet more often, will book an interview at noon. All discussions during the interview are focused only on the technique of meditation and the time allocated for each interview is 5 minutes.

At the end of the day (9pm), those participants that have any doubt, will be able to ask then. Please, keep in mind that the interviews are to clarify any doubt on the practice itself.

The only way that participants can have doubts is by practicing continuously, then, becomes more aware of the technique itself and naturally will require clarifications on how to proceed when some issues present during the meditation practice.

At the end of the retreat you will have concluded that 10 days is not enough to really learn completely this meditation technique; actually, the deeper you go, the more experiences you encounter and the more you learn. Therefore, you must take advantage of every minute you are in the retreat.

Pay extra attention to the guidance, listen carefully to the evening talks, focus more on your meditation practices, when doubts come, try to come up with the answer yourself by practicing, if you don't get the answer, then make the questions to the instructor.

9. Silence during the Retreat

During the meditation retreat, all participants will maintain silence by not talking to anyone, only to the instructor at the interviews. All participants will be focused on their own meditation practice which naturally requires silence and effort from each one to be constantly focused with mind and body into the meditation technique.

Over the years of conducting retreats of this kind, it has been demonstrated that keeping silence is one of the key factors of success to the course. At the beginning, participants who don't know, don't realize the true benefit of keeping in Silence.

Those participants who attended previous courses know the benefits that brings the silence, and some of them request not to be interviewed by the instructor to keep in silence during all the retreat. Unfortunately for them, the interviews are compulsory and will keep to a minimum talk, providing additional instructions, depending on the level of awareness reached by those participants.

Please, do not talk to any other participant in the retreat. Each participant is deepening to their own self and you may obstruct their journey within. Use the notes to communicate with the volunteers and/or the instructor when required. If need to talk, lower the volume of your voice and just talk what is necessary.

Silence must be kept at all times, during breakfast, lunch and during every free time in between each meditation session, while in the bathroom or in the dorms or any other place in the retreat center.

10. Physical contact

It is not allowed any physical contact of any kind with any person during the retreat until the 9th day. This is also important. Each participant is dealing with their own issues manifesting from their subconscious mind and every day we practice meditation, we become more sensitive and go deeper into ourselves. When touching other people, we get entangled with their issues and our inner work gets distorted. Most likely will lose energy, focus and sensitivity to keep going deeper in the meditation.

Remember that you will be accumulating energy every day of the retreat and your mind will become sharper and more aware. You will be more sensitive. So, is wise to avoid physical and visual contact with other.

11. Segregation of male and female participants

There will be a separation of men and women at the meditation hall, at the dining hall and the dorms. At open common areas both will be able to walk and mix but not talk or make physical and visual contact with each other.

In our experience of conducting many retreats and asking participants, have discovered that one of the issues that most women and men work in the first retreats they do is the sexual energy, and it has been useful and recommended to keep certain separation of genders to avoid distraction and facilitate a deeper meditation.

No participants of the opposite sex will be allowed to be in the dorms.

12. Physical exercise during the retreat

It is allowed to do some stretching exercises or some yoga postures in a discrete way avoiding the attention of other participants.

Too much physical exercise will consume the energy we are harnessing to go deeper in meditation. Therefore, your goal should be to relax the body muscles, not to burn fat or increase physical stamina.

It will be difficult for those whose bodies are used to train daily. Please, make a conscious effort to divert the energy to the meditation itself. Otherwise, you will consume your energy and after a few days you will not perceive any improvement with the meditation.

It is not allowed physical training of martial arts, gymnastics, aerobics, jogging, running, hiking, climbing trees or the retreat buildings, bodybuilding or any other sport except the vipassana meditation “sport”.

If you are not sure, you can ask the volunteers or instructor.

13. Drugs and Other Intoxicants

It is prohibited the consumption of any kind of drug (marihuana, cocaine, LSD, amphetamines, ayahuasca, peyote, etc.) or cigarettes, cigars and alcoholic beverages of any kind.

Coffee and tea will be available for those who require it, but it is advisable or recommended to abstain from it if possible.

Drugs and intoxicants alter the natural perception of the mind which is required to be sharper in the retreat. The mind needs to become more concentrated like a laser and more aware of the sensations that come from the 6 senses. The more we practice the meditation, the sharper the mind, the more aware we are and thus we can go deeper into the practice. Drugs and intoxicants work in the opposite direction, makes the mind dull, loses awareness and cannot go deeper into meditation.

14. Food during the Retreat

Every day, at 6:30AM there is a buffet breakfast where you can eat as much as you need. Lunch is at 11:30AM where you can choose what to eat and how much. At 5:00PM there are only fruits, water lemon and hot water to make yourself a herbal tea if you want.

The food provided is semi vegetarian, there will probably be cheese, milk and may be some food cooked with milk products. There will Not be animal meat of any kind. Those who are vegan may choose those food ingredients free of milk products. There will not be a special vegan food as such. Also, consider that some of the ingredients will be organic but other will not. We cannot guarantee that all the food ingredients will be organic.

It is prohibited to fast during the retreat. All participants must eat something at breakfast and lunch.

Every participant´s body is different, so we cannot recommend how much is ideal to eat. You must find your own balance. It is proven that you need enough food to supply energy for your activities during the retreat but not so much food that you end up consuming most of your energy in digestion and lowering the effectiveness of your meditation sessions.

On the contrary, if you fast in a 10-day retreat, you will use your energy in maintaining your physical body and will not have enough energy to go deeper into the meditation. Only on longer retreats, more than 30 days, there is enough accumulated energy that for some people, eating may be unnecessary.

15. Use of clothing and laundry

It is suggested to bring comfortable clothing for the meditation activity. Do not bring clothing and gear for a particular sport you normally practice, as you will not be allowed to practice any sport during the retreat.

Avoid tight clothes which don't allow you to sit comfortably in a meditation session.

Avoid bringing very colorful clothing or shirts with signs or messages that will distract other people. It may be very distracting for others to be looking and reading a message or slogan in your T-shirt.

In the meditation hall Will not be allowed any shoes, therefore, bring extra pairs of socks to avoid feeling cold in your feet.

There will not be laundry service and nowhere to do your laundry. Please, bring enough clothes for the 10 days.

16. Contact with the Outside

There Will not be any contact with the outside world. It will not be allowed the use of friends or relatives to bring food, laundry service, messaging or any other activity.

A phone number will be provided for people to contact the administrator and deliver a message to the participant. So, relatives, colleagues at work and/or friends will be able to call the retreat center and leave a message to be delivered to the participant. This option is available for important and urgent issues.

All participants must stay in the retreat center at all times. It is not allowed to leave the retreat center during the course. Avoid been exposed to people outside the retreat by staying in the center and focus on your meditation practice.

Avoid getting close to the animals that are in the retreat place and outside. Instead, focus on your meditation and avoid their distraction.

17. Medical Emergencies

In case a participant presents a sickness or a special health condition, there will be the option to contact a doctor to assist the person. In this case, it Will be decided if can continue with the meditation course or will have to leave for special care.

Participants who have preexisting medical conditions, will need to provide the contact details for their doctors, so we know in advance who to contact if an issue comes up.

18. Music, reading and other distractions.

It is prohibited the use of electronics or musical instruments to listen to or produce music. Also, it is prohibited to play video games, watch movies, news during the retreat.

Also, it is prohibited the use of toys, cards, puzzle games, etc. to play while in the retreat center.

All types of entertainment are avoided during the retreat so participants can intensively focus on the practice of the meditation all the time.

19. Personal Belongings

Take simple clothing to the retreat, not fancy or expensive clothing and leave your valuable objects (watches, earrings and any other jewelry) at home as they will not be necessary for the meditation.

Once you arrive to the retreat and register with us, you will be asked to put In an envelope all your valuable things and will be kept in a safe place until the 9th day. It is better to put in the envelope your mobile phone, laptop, wallet, camera and other electronics to avoid worrying about them while you are in the meditation hall or the dining hall.

20. Dangerous objects

It is prohibited to keep with you arms or dangerous and/or toxic objects during the retreat. If you have a knife of any kind, firearm or gas cans for camping, please give them to the administration along with your valuable things to be kept in your private envelope. Other unnecessary objects are lighters, matches, cooking items, electric shockers, pepper sprays, etc. At the end of the retreat they will be returned to you.

21. Schedule

4:00 a.m.	Wake up call.
4:30 a 6:30 a.m.	Meditation in the Hall
6:30 a 8:00 a.m.	Breakfast and rest
8:00 a 9:00 a.m.	Meditation in the Hall
9:00 a 11:00 a.m.	Meditation in the Hall
11:00 a 12:00 a.m.	Lunch
12:00 a 1:00 p.m.	Rest / Interviews with the Instructor
1:00 a 2:30 p.m.	Meditation in the Hall
2:30 a 3:30 p.m.	Meditation in the Hall
3:30 a 5:00 p.m.	Meditation in the Hall
5:00 a 6:00 p.m.	Rest
6:00 a 7:00 p.m.	Meditation in the Hall

7:00 a 8:15 p.m.	Technical talk
8:15 a 9:00 p.m.	Meditation in the Hall
9:00 a 9:30 p.m.	Questions / Answers
9:30 p.m.	Sleeping

This Schedule must be followed by all the participants. It has been demonstrated that this is the best schedule for an initial 10-day retreat with a very good rate of success.

Initially, some people will have trouble staying awake at 4:30AM during meditation but after a few days, they will manage to change the sleep time and have no more difficulty in waking up at 4:00AM.

22. Content of the technical daily talks

The daily talks at 7:15PM are focused on the meditation technique. There will not be any philosophical or religious discourse. All the information provided in the course is focused on the meditation techniques and how to achieve the best results possible in a meditation session.

Questions are not allowed during the talks, participants may write down the questions and give it to the Instructor to respond them at 9pm after the day finishes.

During the talks, all participants should continue with the practice while listening to the talks, composed mainly with practical guidance and explanations of the reason why we do things in a certain way while we meditate.

We consider that it is important to understand well how the mind works and what are the possible mechanisms of resistance to become aware of them and be able to bypass them and continue with a deeper meditation.

23. Languages

The retreat is organized to be conducted simultaneously in English and Spanish languages. It is important to understand the instructions provided in order to learn properly how to meditate.

We will soon have the daily talks in Italian and French as well for those who prefer these languages.

At the end of the retreat we make available the talks in a booklet for those who want to take it home as a guide for practicing on their own.

24. Other Considerations

Depending on the particular situation of the retreat center where is conducted the course, there Will be special remarks and/or additional rules to take into consideration for the better of everyone and to guarantee the best learning conditions.

This document will be read at the beginning of the retreat to ensure that all participants are well aware of the rules and are willing to follow them. If you have any questions, you may send them by email and if everything is ok, once we revise them at the beginning of the retreat, we will clarify all of the rules described above and respond to any questions.