

Sacramento Insight Meditation

Creating the Retreat Container at Home

Your personal space

Prepare a space for yourself that is as comfortable and as free of distractions as possible. Set an intention for the retreat and revisit that intention daily. Have a comfortable chair or cushion, lighting that works well for meditating and for attending dharma talks.

Spouses/partners/roommates/children/pets

If you live with other people, discuss with them ahead of time what the process of the retreat is and what your needs and expectations are. Are you planning Noble Silence for the entire five days? If not, arrange ahead of time when and how you will communicate; for example, agreeing to catching up when sharing your evening meal. Knowing what your expectations are and communicating them clearly ahead of time will make the retreat smoother for you and the entire household.

If you have pets, anticipate what issues might come up (the cat that wants to sit in your lap, the whining dog that scratches at your door, for example) and how you plan to deal with them.

Meals

Plan simple, nutritious meals. Decide before the retreat how the tasks of meal preparation and cleanup will be shared. It can be helpful to create a schedule for these activities. It can also be helpful to develop a meal plan, shop for your groceries, and cook ahead of time meals that can be easily reheated.

Consider food preparation and clean up as a part of practice in which you bring a relaxed awareness to all your activities.

Walking meditation

Plan ahead of time where and when you can do your walking meditation.

Avoid distractions

Set up an “away” message for email; silence your phone and disable notifications; consider using a timer that is not on your phone; pay bills ahead of time; consider how you will deal with external noises (the UPS delivery ringing the door bell, that barking dog, the roar of a gardener’s leaf-blower).

Zoom Retreat behavior

Please arrive a few minutes early to online sittings and practice discussions and stay until the teacher has left the session, just as you would in a meditation hall.

Consider where your computer will be when you are online so that other retreatants are not distracted by what is behind you. Consider not using a virtual background. If you use a background, let it be simple and calming. Tidy up your space and consider covering bookcases, stacks of paper and other areas that may be visible on your screen.

Leave your camera on during sittings and discussions. This gives a sense of sitting together, instead of simply viewing names on a screen. However, if you are doing non-retreat activities, please turn off the video so as to not distract others.

Be mindful of your physical movements during sittings the same way you would in the meditation hall: not moving around, drinking, eating, or “leaving the hall” unless necessary. Also please be mindful of moving the phone or tablet while the camera is on. It is visually disturbing to see the camera moving while walking, for example.

Usually, the retreat host will mute your microphone. The teachers may invite comments during periods set aside for Q&A or discussions. Be conscious of keeping your microphone muted until retreatants are invited to engage in questions or discussions.

Questions from participants for the teachers’ Q&A discussions should be sent in advance of each session to question@sactoinsight.org. The teachers will review the practice questions or comments and respond during the sessions. Please note that with so many participants, the teachers may combine questions or comments for purposes of clarity and general relevance.

In advance of the retreat, general retreat questions or technical questions may be sent to sarad@sactoinsight.org. During the retreat, more general retreat questions or technical questions may be sent to the retreat manager/Zoom host of the day using the Chat function on Zoom, or emailed to Rich Howard at rich@sactoinsight.org. If you are having trouble getting on Zoom, you can text Rich at (916) 203-0952.