

Creating a Home Retreat: Finding Freedom Wherever You Are [FREE Half Day Retreat Included]

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Hi Dear Ones,

When a widespread difficulty like the Coronavirus pandemic grows, it becomes important to draw on our inner strength. It is the time to pause, reflect and bring wisdom, courage and care to ourselves and those around us. We human beings have survived for a thousand generations, helping one another and inspiring each other. We know how to do this. Instead of getting caught in collective fear and anxiety, we can remember to take a breath, center ourselves, and take practical precautions and protections, but calmly and in the spirit of love. Each of us can contribute to the well-being of ourselves, our communities and our world.

As Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh explains:

When the crowded Vietnamese refugee boats met with storms or pirates, if everyone panicked all would be lost. But if even one person on the boat remained calm and centered, it was enough. It showed the way for everyone to survive.

Let us practice together in these difficult days so we can be that person.

Create a Home Retreat

With the spreading coronavirus, there is the need for many to stay at home. This is the perfect time to create a home retreat for yourself.

The purpose of a retreat is to follow a formal rhythm of practice that allows you to center yourself, tend your body, quiet your mind, see the present circumstances with clarity and freedom, and open your heart. It will take some dedication to do this, and we will show you how to set it up. By choosing to let go of the usual habits of distraction, online time, unnecessary busyness and tasks that can wait, you can make this a beneficial and healing time.

Though initially a home retreat may feel unfamiliar or hard, you will gradually find yourself settling in and feeling grateful for the rewards. Now is the perfect time to draw on the inner strength of meditation and deepen your capacity to live amidst it all with awareness and compassion.

As a support for your practice, we are including a video of a guided half day retreat—here's the link: [Free Half-Day Home Mindfulness Retreat with Jack Kornfield and Tara Brach](#)

We've also included a list of online resources that you might find helpful in planning your retreat. [Check it out right here.](#)

Here are the elements that will help make a home retreat work for you:

Decide on Your Schedule

Considering your level of meditation experience and your other obligations, create a daily schedule for yourself. Be realistic. If you are new to retreat, start modestly.

For beginners, schedule several 20-30 min sitting periods in the morning, and several periods in the afternoon and evening. Have each sitting period alternate with a 20-30 minute period of walking meditation, yoga, Tai Chi or quiet mindful walks outdoors, if available. [If you are new to walking meditation, here are some instructions.](#) If you are more experienced, make your sittings 45-60 minutes, with a period of mindful movement between each sitting.

Your retreat might be for one day, or for as many as fit your current life. Should you choose a multi-day retreat, once you have created a schedule, stick to it for two days and learn how it works for you. Then you can extend it for more days. Even at home, the mind takes time to quiet down. This is especially true in a time of difficulty in our lives or in the society around us. Be patient. [Here is a full day sample schedule](#) that can be modified to best fit your needs.

Create a Container of Stillness

Being on retreat requires spending most of the day in silence, minimizing communication with others and refraining from news and entertainment. Try to structure your retreat days with simplicity—put an away message on your email, save your snail mail for later, prepare the simplest meals you can...some in advance if you're able to.

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.

Listen to Teachings

Once or twice a day listen to a talk that supports your retreat practice.

Experienced practitioners might visit dharmafeed.org or Insight Timer, where you will find talks and teachings on many topics, from a variety of teachers. Often, teachers will include audio and

video talks on their websites. There are many to choose from at www.jackkornfield.com and www.tarabrach.com.

On any of these platforms, you might choose talks given at retreats that will guide you over the course of a week or 10 days. We've included a sample list on the attached resource page.

New meditators might use our **Mindfulness Daily** program and do several lessons a day. [You can download this free course here](#). These talks are short, and can be followed by a longer period of silent sitting practice.

Enjoy Guided Meditations

Listening to and following along with guided meditations can be tremendously helpful, particularly when you are doing a retreat at home without the support of others around you.

As with the talks and teachings already mentioned, guided meditations can be freely downloaded via teacher websites (www.tarabrach.com, www.jackkornfield.com, www.trudygoodman.com) or other platforms like [Dharma Seed](#) or [Insight Timer](#). Use them liberally.

Listen to practices of mindful breath, mindful loving awareness, compassion and loving kindness, big sky of mind, healing, self-compassion and others. You can repeat them many times, and let the audio guidance help deepen your meditations. Reading along with transcripts can also be helpful. [Here is a list of guided meditations and heart practices to get you started](#).

Choose Your Practices

In this time of collective difficulty it is good to include both awareness meditations and heart-centered practices as part of your retreat.

Practicing with mindful and loving awareness, you can learn to be a field of peace, a compassionate witnessing of all that arises in body and mind. For many, this means beginning with a simple breath practice to calm and steady the mind, and then opening the field of mindfulness for all else that arises.

Adding practices of Lovingkindness and Compassion for yourself and all those around you can deepen your ability to hold the current situation with a big heart, tenderness and respect for all. Practicing an open sky meditation, which invites a sense of vastness and timelessness, can give you a spacious perspective to hold it all.

Choose a one or two simple practices from the above referenced websites and stick with them for the first days. [Here are some suggestions](#).

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. [Here a few dharma talks that offer guidance in navigating the waves.](#)

Read Mindfully

It can be enormously helpful to read teachings and about meditation. Re-reading favorite classics like *A Path With Heart*, *Zen Mind Beginners Mind*, *Radical Acceptance* and *Being Peace* can provide the perfect complement to your meditation. Choose a few of your favorite books and read them periodically through the days of your retreat for support and inspiration.

Connect with Spiritual Friends

It is really helpful to have the support of others when you undertake a retreat. In person, sitting and walking together makes a very strong field of shared focus and intention that carries everyone together. For a home retreat, it is also very helpful to have the support of others who are practicing at the same time.

If you can, find a retreat buddy or several friends and agree to do the retreat days together. Let each other know the schedule you will be following and set a time twice a day to check in with one another by zoom or FaceTime to mindfully share your experience of the day—the difficulties and the successes. You might also use this time to meditate together. You will be surprised at how inspiring and helpful this can be.

Join a Larger Community

Joining together in Sangha is an essential part of practice. Many meditation centers feature online classes, spiritual friends groups and other offerings. Here are a few that might interest you: www.imcw.org, www.spiritrock.org, www.insightla.org, www.dharma.org

Online Resources for Your Home Retreat

For those newer to meditation, here is a [structured 1/2 day mindfulness retreat with Tara and Jack](#). This retreat includes a shared schedule of sitting, walking, and teaching and is part of our popular *Power of Awareness* training.

Sample schedule for residential mindfulness retreats:

6:30 - 7:00	Mindful Movement
7:00 - 9:00	Breakfast
9:00 - 9:30	Sitting
9:30 - 10:00	Walking or other movement

10:00 - 10:30	Sitting
10:30 - 11:00	Walking or other movement
11:00 - 11:30	Sitting
11:30 - 2:00	Lunch, rest, read, movement
2:00 - 2:30	Sitting
2:30 - 3:30	Walking or Mindful Movement
3:30 - 4:00	Heart Meditation
4:00 - 4:30	Walking
4:30 - 5:00	Sitting
5:00 - 7:00	Supper & Walking
7:00 - 7:30	Sitting
7:30 - 8:00	Walking
8:00 - 8:45	Listening to dharma talk
8:45 - 9:30	Stretch or walk, then sitting

Walking Meditation - Instructions

- [Walking Meditation and Instructions – Tara Brach](#) (Transcript Available)

Sample list of daily retreat talks:

Day 1

- [The Blessings of Embodied Presence - Tara Brach](#)
- [The Seat of Awakening – Jack Kornfield](#)
- [Peace of Mind – Trudy Goodman](#)

Day 2

- [The Power of Awake Awareness – Tara Brach](#)
- [The 3 Gateways to Freedom – Jack Kornfield](#)
- [Awareness – Trudy Goodman](#)

Day 3

- [Trusting the Gold - Tara Brach](#)
- [The Garden of the Heart – Jack Kornfield](#)
- [The Wood Wide Web of Being - Trudy Goodman](#)

Day 4

- [Love and Death - Tara Brach](#)
- [Vastness and Love – Jack Kornfield](#)
- [Devotion – Trudy Goodman](#)

Day 5

- [Realizing Our Undefended and Awakened Heart – Tara Brach](#)
- [The 10 Perfections – Jack Kornfield](#)
- [Calm – Trudy Goodman](#)

Day 6

- [Widening the Circles of Compassion – Tara Brach](#)
- [The Bodhisattva – Jack Kornfield](#)
- [Sila as a Way to Love – Trudy Goodman](#)

Guided Meditations

- [Coming Home with the Breath \(20:34 min\) - Tara Brach](#)
- [Breath Meditation \(15:00 min\) – Trudy Goodman](#)
- [Arriving in Embodied Presence \(24:00 min\) - Tara Brach](#)
- [Mindfulness of the Breath and Body \(30:00 min\) – Trudy Goodman](#)
- [Basic Body Scan \(20 min\) - Tara Brach](#)
- [Big Sky Meditation \(38:39 min\) – Jack Kornfield](#)
- [Open Awareness - Relaxing Back into Presence \(30:00 min\) - Tara Brach](#)

Guided Heart Meditations

- [A Steady Heart \(13:45 min\) – Jack Kornfield](#)
- [Metta - with instructions \(39:55 min\) - Tara Brach](#)
- [Guided Meditation: Metta \(30:53 min\) - Tara Brach](#)
- [Lovingkindness Meditation \(30:09 min\) – Trudy Goodman](#)
- [Lovingkindness Meditation – Metta \(35:59 min\) – Trudy Goodman](#)
- [Loving Awareness toward the Body \(13:51 min\) – Trudy Goodman](#)
- [Forgiveness Meditation \(11:30 min\) – Trudy Goodman](#)
- [The Practice of Compassion \(11:04 min\) – Jack Kornfield](#)
- [Tonglen/Radical Compassion \(32:43 min\) – Tara Brach](#)
- [Compassion in the Time of Coronavirus \(12:00 min\) – Jack Kornfield](#)

Working with Difficulty – Talks and Meditations

- [Radical Acceptance Revisited - Tara Brach](#) (Transcript Available)
- [Spiritual Reparenting - Tara Brach](#) (Transcript Available)
- [Darkness of the Womb: 4-Key Steps in Transforming Suffering - Tara Brach](#) (Transcript Available)
- [Fear as a Pathway to Loving Presence: Night Travelers - Tara Brach](#) (Transcript Available)
- [Healing Trauma: The Light Shines Through the Broken Places - Tara Brach](#) (Transcript Available)
- [Disarming Our Hearts: Letting Go of Blame - Tara Brach](#)
- [The Dance with Pain - Tara Brach](#)
- [Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Working with Attachments and Addictions - Tara Brach](#)
- [Reflection: Transforming Fear \(11:19 min\) – Tara Brach](#)
- [Bringing RAIN to Difficulty - Tara Brach](#) (Transcript Available)