

GUIDELINES AND PRACTICES FOR REDUCING THE RISK OF SPREADING COVID-19

We are making a great effort to mitigate the risk of contracting COVID-19; however, any venture outside our own homes entails risk. We leave it to your good judgment to determine if this retreat is right for you.

We are sending this information to all participants as the starting point for caring for ourselves and the community. Much of it will be self-evident but please read it carefully. We believe that agreeing to these guidelines will help us build confidence and trust that we are all practicing with the wish to protect ourselves and others both in solitude and in community.

If for any reason you cannot agree to wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth, or abide by any of our other guidelines, please do not attend this retreat. If you have already registered, contact us immediately to arrange to withdraw your registration.

If you have any concerns about our efforts to reduce the threat of the coronavirus, please let us know in advance.

HOW COVID-19 IS SPREAD

People who are in close contact can spread COVID-19 through respiratory droplets and smaller particles (aerosols) produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks, sings, or breathes. These droplets can land in the mouth or nose of someone or be inhaled into the lungs. The risk of this is much greater in a contained, poorly ventilated space. Even outside, though, there is still risk – especially at close proximity. Current public health guidelines recommend maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet, but evidence has shown that spread is possible at further distances. A person might also get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes. This is a much less likely mode for transmission but is still worth keeping in mind.

This is an article that will familiarize you with the general conditions for transmission:

<https://www.erinbromage.com/post/the-risks-know-them-avoid-them>

RETREAT SETUP AND ORGANIZATION

Our retreat center is taking many precautions for us. For example, the retreat size is limited; guest rooms are cleaned thoroughly; common areas and frequently touched surfaces are cleaned throughout the day and immediately after group use. Seating in the dining room will be spaced more than 6 feet apart, and guests have the option of eating their meals outdoors. Staff will serve guests at meals in a manner that limits contact with buffet utensils and any objects guests might touch. Your temperature will be taken daily.

The schedule will include communal elements along with maximum opportunities for seclusion. Self-scheduled practice periods will stagger occupancy of the common rooms and reduce the number of people in the meditation hall at any one time. Retreatants will have the option of practicing in the meditation hall, their own rooms, or outside. Live daily dharma talks and meditation instructions will be broadcast via the internet, giving retreatants the option to either listen using their devices from other areas on the property or attend the live presentation in the meditation hall.

Seating will be spaced at least 6 feet apart in the meditation hall, in the dining hall, and for group and individual interviews. The speaker will sit at least 12 feet from the audience. Social distancing from others of at least 6 feet will be required at all times, both indoors and outdoors. When weather permits, some elements of the program may be held outdoors.

To attend this retreat, each retreatant [including those who have been fully vaccinated,] must agree to respect our guidelines, remain on the property after arrival until the end of the retreat, wear a mask in indoor common areas including the meditation hall, permit the staff to check their temperature daily, and agree to leave the retreat immediately if they become ill or have a temperature above 100 degrees F.

PREPARING FOR THE RETREAT

In the two weeks before the retreat, please self-isolate as much as possible. This is a good opportunity to have quiet time to practice more meditation at home.

Please do not engage in any activities that would put you in groups of people (such as family gatherings, house parties, gyms, funerals, protest marches, etc.). Please do not interact with anyone outside your own household without wearing a well-fitted face covering.

Carefully monitor your health during these two weeks.

Keep asking yourself regularly: Am I feeling poorly in any way?

Symptoms that might be part of a COVID infection:

- fever > 100 degrees – please use a thermometer;
- cough
- sore throat
- shortness of breath
- unusual headaches
- fatigue
- chills
- gastro-intestinal symptoms such as diarrhea or stomach cramps
- loss of sense of smell or taste.

Take care of your health. Avoid stress. Get plenty of sleep. Do whatever you believe will strengthen your immune system.

If COVID-19 tests are available in your area, consider getting tested a few days prior to travel. **A negative test will not allow you to waive the protective practices** of wearing masks and social distancing. It does not ensure that you were not exposed to the virus during travel, but it might assure you that you are not one of the asymptomatic cases who could unknowingly spread the virus.

Get vaccinated if possible. But understand that vaccination will not allow you to waive the protective practices outlined in this document.

Anyone who is feeling unwell prior to traveling or believes they have been exposed to the coronavirus in the 14 days prior to the retreat is asked to please not travel to this retreat. If you

must cancel at the last minute due to illness, we will transfer your payment, less the deposit, into a voucher credit for a future Bodhi Retreats event.

TRAVELING TO THE RETREAT

Please carefully consider how you will get to the retreat. Optimize safety and isolation in your travel plans. Maintain the recommended social distance and increase ventilation as much as possible. Due to the potential risk of infection, we have suspended our usual custom of encouraging carpooling or ride sharing.

If you become ill during the retreat, have a temperature of 100 degrees or above, or experience flu-like symptoms or cough — whether you believe it is COVID-19 or just a common cold — you will be asked to depart immediately. Therefore, you must have a plan for how you will depart from the retreat if you become ill. It would be best if you have your own vehicle, a rental car, or a pre-arranged agreement with local friends or family who will pick you up if you become ill. If friends or household members choose to travel to the retreat in the same car, understand that if one of them has to leave early, the other will have to go too; we cannot ask another participant to provide a ride.

Wash and sanitize your hands regularly. Use disinfectant wipes to clean the surfaces you will touch.

UPON ARRIVING AT THE RETREAT

Registration will be from 2:00pm to 4:00pm.

You will be greeted by the staff, assigned a room, and asked to wear a face mask and to wash/sanitize your hands. Your temperature will be taken.

After settling into your room, please store your travel clothes for laundering at home, or at least store them away from anything that you will touch for the first 3 days of the retreat. Wipe off the exterior surfaces of your travel shoes with an alcohol wipe, or else store them away from anything you will touch during the first few days of retreat. As soon as possible, take a shower and thoroughly wash your hair, face, and body to remove any contaminants from travel. Put on a clean mask, not the same one you wore during travel.

Although it might be a joy to see old friends or to greet newcomers, please maintain social distance at all times. **No hugging. No physical contact.**

DURING THE RETREAT

Observe Social Distancing

We will be maintaining social distancing (a minimum of six feet apart; farther is better) and will always be wearing masks indoors and when near others outdoors. Everyone's safety depends on this. You can still smile, place your hand over your heart, bow or otherwise show appreciation. We will be practicing noble silence and encouraging warmth within our retreat container.

Clean Your Hands Often

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have had any worrisome contact. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. We will have some hand sanitizer, but please bring a small bottle so you can have it handy. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

Cover Coughs And Sneezes

Keep a mask on anytime you are near other people, including when sitting in a group circle outside.

Please do not blow your nose in public areas such as the dining room and meditation hall. Instead, wipe with a tissue and dispose of the tissue safely. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or use the inside of your elbow in addition to wearing the mask. A homemade mask only reduces spray by around 40%, so additionally covering the mouth or nose can be helpful. Dispose of any tissues in appropriate trash receptacles, and immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

If coughing or sneezing persists, you should leave the retreat.

Dining Room Procedures

Before coming into the dining room you will need to wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Even if you washed your hands 10 minutes before, you must rewash or sanitize your hands before entering the dining room. Upon finishing your meal, be sure to wash your hands again since your own saliva may have been transferred to your hands during the meal.

Communications With The Teacher

Small groups and individual meetings will be scheduled. As much as possible they will be held outdoors, with participants maintaining 6 feet distance and wearing masks.

As usual, there will be a bulletin board for urgent communications with the teacher. We ask that you exercise restraint and consideration by posting only notes that are genuinely important.

Monitoring Your Health

Beyond the daily temperature checks the staff will administer, continue monitoring your health. Ask yourself regularly: Am I feeling poorly in any way? If you feel unwell and have any symptoms reflective of COVID-19, inform the teacher via note or email, and remain in your room. The teacher will assist you to manage your own health and the health of the community.

If you are having a temperature you will need to depart immediately. But if you do not have a fever but feel slightly unwell, please isolate yourself in your room and monitor your temperature. Do not come to the meditation hall, dining hall, or any group or individual meeting for at least 24 hours. Arrangements will be made to deliver your meals. This will give you 24 hours to decide, for instance, if a headache or diarrhea is of concern or just the result of poor sleep and different food.

IF YOU BECOME ILL DURING THE RETREAT

If you become ill, you will be asked to depart immediately. You should have a plan for where you will go and how you will get there. Even during a pandemic, most illnesses are not COVID-

19, but whether your symptoms are mild or severe, we urge you to get tested if possible upon returning home. And, let us know how you are doing and the results of the test.

The costs of an early departure (all retreat fees and travel expenses) will be borne by the retreatant and not reimbursed by Insight Meditation South Bay, Bodhi Retreats, or its affiliates.

IF YOU BECOME ILL WITHIN THREE WEEKS AFTER THE RETREAT

If you become ill and test positive for COVID-19 after returning home, please inform us immediately. Contact retreatregistration@imsb.org or call Susan at: (917) 862-3022. We will inform the retreat center and other participants to urge everyone to take extra precautions, thoroughly disinfect, self-isolate, carefully monitor health, and get tested.

It is imperative that we share our infection status to enable participants to protect their families. The disease can spread before symptoms manifest.

WHAT TO PACK

All the usual personal supplies (clothes, unscented toiletries, etc.) that are listed in the Welcome Packet. *Plus:*

- Laptop computer and cell phone with charging cables, to enable live-streaming of dhamma teachings.
- Masks. Please bring several so that you have fresh ones on hand. Masks must effectively cover your nose and mouth. One-way valves that vent exhalation are not acceptable since they do not protect others from your breath. Loose fitting masks that slide down the nose are also unacceptable.
- Personal supply of hand sanitizer. Alcohol wipes for cleaning travel shoes, surfaces of electronic devices, etc.
- Plastic bags for storing travel clothing and shoes.
- Personal supply of tissues. Plastic bags for disposing of personal tissues after use.
- Personal supply of unscented hand and body moisturizer.
- Personal supply of cough drops.
- Personal supply of allergy remedies if you are prone to spring allergies.
- More than enough clothing. You will not have access to laundry facilities.
- Inside shoes and outside shoes.
- You might want to have two sets of sitting gear—sitting cushions, shawls, mats or whatever you might want to sit on in your own room as well as in the meditation hall.
- Whatever supports your immune system or you feel protects you from illness. Make the effort to stay healthy and be able to care for yourself without needing help from others.

A travel thermometer can be useful in case you have a need to check your own temperature to monitor your health.

Please consider printing this document and bringing it with you as a reminder of the details.