



Are you ready to take a deeper dive into your meditation practice? Use this guide to help create your own immersive weekend retreat at home. Try starting your retreat Friday evening and ending Sunday after lunch to give yourself time to transition before heading back to daily life on Monday.

For longer retreats, it's ideal to be under the guidance of an experienced teacher.

Creating Boundaries:

In the Tibetan language the word for retreat, "Tsam", also means "separation" or "boundary". Prior to starting your weekend retreat think about where you'll have it and the boundaries that you'll need to set to be successful. Imagine a 3D bubble that hugs your retreat space, then set the intention to renew that boundary every morning. What's inside the boundary and what's outside? Who's inside the boundary and who's outside?

Try to be technology free during retreat. Send out a group text or email to your family, friends, and colleagues that you'll be on retreat for a few days. Retreat is a time to limit contact with the outside world and people. If necessary, you can choose to allow a few people to disturb you on retreat and intentionally include them in your boundary setting.

A visualization to start off your boundary setting is to imagine flames coming out of your heart, rising up and burning all of the negative thoughts and influences around you. Then the flames come back in the form of tiny vajras that make a chainmail boundary. Everything that's outside stays out and everything inside stays inside.

Practices of Retreat:

Start where you are by focusing on the practices you're currently working with in retreat. A good structure is to expand the Round Robin practice to the length of a whole session. Consider doing 10-15 minutes each of Shamata, Vipassana, Tonglen or the Four Immeasurables, and then repeating Shamata and Vipassana. At the beginning and end of every session remember your true altruistic motivation for the practice and bring it into the foreground. End your practice by dedicating your efforts to everyone waking up.



It's common in retreat for something to come up that was hidden in the background. Don't push these thoughts away. That usually doesn't work. There is a Zen saying: "Meditate as if your hair was on fire!" These figurative "hair on fire" moments are important because they help us process and resolve hidden thoughts. Even though it can be painful in the middle of the process, you'll come out the other side feeling relieved and grateful.



If you want to include journaling in your retreat, have a notepad by your cushion to quickly write down questions or inspirations that come up during practice. You can also include journaling in any of your two-hour sessions.

Structure of Retreat:

While it's easy to make your body stay in retreat, getting your mind to stay is a different matter. That's why planning the structure beforehand is important. Start your first two-hour session when you wake up — even before breakfast. We recommend beginning this session with the Clearing the Stale Winds practice. You want to work your way up to the lengthy sessions gently.

A healthy, nourishing breakfast helps us fuel our bodies to stay focused and calm throughout

retreat. Low-caffeine products like green tea or decaf coffee can be a pleasant ending to breakfast and won't have you bouncing off the walls.

After breakfast do your second two-hour session, then break for lunch. It's better to have a longer lunch to include yoga, or light exercise since you will be spending a lot of time on your cushion during retreat. You could even take a nap or read the biographies of High Lamas or Buddhist-enlightened people.

After lunch, you'll have another two-hour session, then dinner, and end with your final two-hour session of the day.

Post Retreat:

After retreat, be gentle with yourself and try not to push too hard as that can wash away the benefits before you've had time to process them. Focus on bringing forth what you've learned into your daily life and practice. Continue your meditation sessions throughout the week. Perhaps try to increase your daily practice to twice a day or even an extended practice once a day. Look over your journaling for anything that came up to review going forward. It might also be helpful to join one of Namchak's monthly meditation coaching calls to get advice.



Disclaimer: Remember, we may offer health, fitness, nutritional and related information for help with your retreat, but such information is designed and provided for informational purposes only. No information on Namchak.org is intended to convey medical advice and if you feel an emotional or physical condition that you are unfamiliar with, please consult a medical professional or provider for assistance. We are not responsible for any actions or inaction on your part based on the information that is presented in this blog.