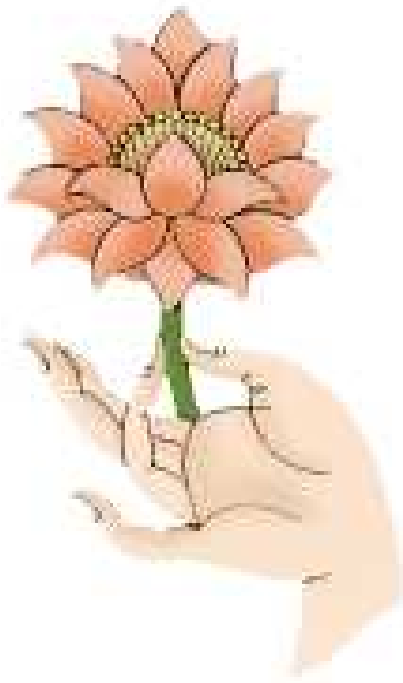


# *Metta*

## *Retreat Guidelines*



# WELCOME

## METTA RETREAT GUIDELINES

*Metta is love, unconditional, all-pervasive, all-encompassing love.*

**Metta** (Loving-Kindness) is one of four “brahma-viharas” the 4 'sublime' or 'Divine Abodes', also called the 4 Boundless States: Loving-kindness (**mettā**), Compassion (**karunā**), Appreciative Joy (**muditā**), Equanimity (**upekkhā**).

Metta (Loving-Kindness) is a practice that opens the heart. The four brahma-vihara practices of love, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity help ease the burdens of life's inevitable difficulties. The Buddha referred to the “brahma-viharas” as “Boundless or Divine Abodes”. Entering wholeheartedly into the practice of Metta allows us to directly experience immeasurable, unconditional love.

The following guidelines, if followed closely, will help you maximize your retreat experience.

### SCHEDULE

The schedule has been developed to help you derive the most from the retreat. This framework works well for beginners as well as experienced meditators. If for any reason you are unable to follow the schedule, please notify one of the teachers. Remember, the effectiveness of your practice is directly proportional to the sustained, uninterrupted attention on loving-kindness.

### SILENCE

With the exception of the interviews, the retreat is held in complete silence. Try to keep your eyes down as much as possible. If the eyes happen to stray, offer metta to the object observed. Metta requires concentration which leads to absorption.

Please abstain from reading and writing except for the notes needed to make your reports during the interviews (see “INTERVIEWS” below).

Also, to aid in maintaining the silence:

- Turn off beepers and alarms on digital watches.
- All 'essential' questions regarding housekeeping, retreat procedures, can be communicated in writing and posted on the bulletin board, (emergencies are of course an exception).

## **KARMA YOGA**

Karma yoga (your job) enables us to keep costs as low as possible. It is also an important part of mindfulness practice, one that helps us integrate our sitting practice into our daily life. Keeping costs at a minimum allows Spring Rain Sangha to provide scholarships for those otherwise unable to attend retreats. Please try to perform your task mindfully with an open heart.

## **PRECEPTS**

Everyone on retreat is expected to adhere to the following five Precepts. An explanation of the importance and profundity of each one is beyond the scope of this orientation. However, please realize that these five precepts are the foundation upon which all spiritual practice stands.

### **THE FIVE PRECEPTS**

1. I undertake the precept to refrain from causing harm to living beings.
2. I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not given.
3. I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct. (There is no sexual activity while on retreat.)
4. I undertake the precept to refrain from incorrect speech.
5. I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating drinks and drugs which lead to carelessness.

## **MEDITATION HALL PROTOCOL AND ETIQUETTE**

- Except for emergencies, retreatants should not enter or leave the hall while a sitting is taking place. If you arrive late, please do not enter the hall and thus disturb others.
- Please do not bring any food or drinks (other than water) into the hall.
- Maintaining an orderly environment can be helpful in developing an internal quietness.
- If it is necessary to move during a sitting period please do so slowly and silently. Do not lie down in the hall. If you have a medical condition check with one of the teachers.
- Scents: Do not wear any perfumes or other scented products — many people have allergies.

## The Five Hindrances

HINDRANCE	ANTIDOTE
1. Sensual Desire	Reflect on the impermanence of the object desired.
2. Hatred, Ill will	Metta -if necessary picture the person suffering, or as a child.
3. Sloth & torpor	Bring light into body/mind, open eyes, stand, brisk walk, reflect on rare opportunity to be born human and have this chance to practice Dhamma.
4. Restlessness & worry	Slow the breath; keep bringing mindfulness to the breath.
5. Skeptical doubt	Investigate the dhamma- the three characteristics of existence.

### FIVE WAYS FOR THE REMOVAL OF DISTRACTING THOUGHT

1. **SUBSTITUTE:** reflect on a different object, which is connected with skill... Like an experienced carpenter or carpenter's apprentice, striking hard at, pushing out, and getting rid of a coarse peg with a fine one, should the bhikkhu in order to get rid of the adventitious object, reflect on a different object which is connected with skill.
2. **REFLECT:** ponder on the disadvantages of unskilful thoughts thus: Truly these thoughts of mine are unskilful, blameworthy, and productive of misery.
3. **IGNORE:** endeavour to be without attention and reflection as regards them.
4. **REMOVE THE CAUSE:** one should reflect on the removal of the *source* of those unskilful thoughts.
5. **SUPPRESS:** If evil, unskilful thoughts continue to arise in spite of reflection on the removal of a source of unskilful thoughts, one should with clenched teeth and the tongue pressing on the palate, restrain, and subdue the (evil) mind by the (good) mind. (*Suppression used as a last resort so one does not act out one's anger/hatred*)

## INTERVIEWS

The purpose of the interviews is to provide encouragement and offer individual guidance.

Metta is an in-depth practice that requires balancing the transforming influence of right effort with our mindfulness and concentration practice. In order to accomplish this, it is essential to maintain continuous attentiveness in all activities.

*Whether standing, walking, seated, or lying down,  
Free from drowsiness,  
One should sustain this recollection.  
This is said to be the sublime abiding.  
By not holding to fixed views,  
The pure-hearted one, having clarity of vision,  
Being freed from all sense desires,  
Is not born again into this world.*

*Metta sutta*

### In the Interview Room

- Please begin by stating your practice.
- The effectiveness of the interview depends upon complete honesty. Do not try to impress the teacher.
- Metta is not just a mantra or recitation practice.
- Keep your interviews short and to the point.
- A determined and sustained effort to actualize metta in all one's activities opens the heart to boundless joy, rapture and radiance.

## PRACTICING THE BRAHMA-VIHARAS (Boundless Abodes)

The boundless states or *brahma-viharas* help us dissolve self view (the idea of a separate permanent self).

1. Loving kindness (*metta*)
2. Compassion (*karuna*)
3. Appreciative Joy (*mudita*)
4. Equanimity (*upekkha*)

The near enemy is a quality that can masquerade as the brahma-vihara. The far enemy is clearly the opposite quality. The boundless states serve as antidotes for both the near and far enemies.

<b>Pali</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Near Enemy</b>	<b>Far Enemy</b>
<i>metta</i>	loving kindness	good-will, friendship, unconditional love for all beings	selfish love (love with attachment)	hatred
<i>karuna</i>	compassion	empathy, to feel with someone instead of for someone	pity	cruelty
<i>mudita</i>	sympathetic joy	spontaneous joy in response to others' successes	hypocrisy	envy
<i>upekkha</i>	equanimity	even-mindedness based on insight into the true nature of existence	indifference	anxiety

## **BENEFITS**

The Buddha said that there are 11 benefits that come from a heart filled with loving-kindness:

1. You will sleep easily.
2. You will wake easily.
3. You will have pleasant dreams.
4. People will love you.
5. Devas and animals will love you.
6. Devas will protect you.
7. External dangers will not harm you.
8. Your face will be radiant.
9. Your mind will be serene.
10. You will die unconfused.
11. You will be reborn in happy realms.

Metta connects us with our inherent nature and is the basis for intimacy with all life. Practicing the brahma-viharas helps us dissolve the sense of alienation and opens the heart.

## PRACTICE

Metta (and the other brahma-viharas) acknowledge the natural tendency to form habits of mind according to certain stimuli. I.e., focusing on anger, or that which depresses one, will strengthen those energies in the mind. If, on the other hand, we focus on loving-kindness and well-being, we imprint these positive, skillful states on the mind.

The following phrases can be used to help ‘plant seeds’ of metta/karuna/mudita and upekka:

### METTA

- May I be filled with happiness
- May I be filled with loving-kindness
- May my mind be at ease
- May I be filled with joy
- May I live happily
  
- May **you** be filled with happiness...

### KARUNA

- May I be free from all suffering
- May I be well
- May I be free from harm
- May I be free from danger
  
- May **you** be free from all suffering...

### MUDITA

- I rejoice in my good fortune,
- my good qualities
- and my accomplishments
  
- I rejoice in **your** good fortune...

## **UPEKKHA**

- May I accept things as they are
- No matter how much I may wish for things to be otherwise, things are just as they are
- This is the nature of life
- I open to the conditions of my life with equanimity
- May my heart be big enough to hold all of life's joys and sorrows without being overwhelmed
- I accept what is
- All things are just as they are

(These phrases can be applied to the following categories; we always begin with ourselves)

## **CATEGORIES**

Self

Benefactor

Beloved Friend

Neutral person

Difficult person

All beings

A note on forgiveness: It may be helpful to do a forgiveness practice before attempting to radiate metta to a "difficult person".

## **FORGIVENESS**

Ask forgiveness of those you have harmed:

- If I have hurt or harmed anyone, knowingly or unknowingly, I ask forgiveness. "Please forgive me, I am sorry."

Offer forgiveness to those who have harmed you:

- If anyone has hurt or harmed me, knowingly or unknowingly, I forgive them. "I forgive you."

Offer forgiveness to yourself:

- For all the ways I have hurt or harmed myself, knowingly or unknowingly, I offer forgiveness. "I forgive myself."

## **LEAVING THE RETREAT EARLY**

All aspects of the retreat are essential beginning with the application process and ending with the closing circle on the last day. How we participate in a retreat is a reflection of how we live our life. Retreats offer us the opportunity to develop sincerity, courage and help us cultivate loving-kindness and equanimity.

Unless prior arrangement for an early departure has been made do not leave the retreat early. It is important to have a reentry orientation (post retreat instruction). If you feel you absolutely need to leave the retreat it is essential that you meet with a teacher to clarify your thoughts and feelings necessitating the early departure.

## **DANA**

Dana is a Pali word meaning “offering”. Ideally dana is the natural expression of a loving, open and generous heart.

The teachers of Spring Rain Sangha follow the time honored practice of offering the Buddha’s teachings without cost to students. This venerable tradition predates the Buddha, reaching back to the Vedic understanding that the teachings are so precious that no price can be set on them. Still today, in countries of their origin, one never comes to a teacher empty handed. Offerings are often made in the form of food, flowers, incense, shawls or money. The student’s generosity helps to perpetuate the dhamma. This generosity supports the teacher and provides an opportunity for the student to express gratitude for the teachings.

How much to give? This is often asked. Give according to your means. One should not give beyond one’s means. It is the expression of gratitude that is important.

What to give? Obviously here in the West a monetary offering is the most convenient.

How to give? This is a very important part of the “Perfection of Giving.” The offering is anonymous for reasons that are apparent. Dana is an occasion where one can observe “greed,” “pride,” “arrogance,” “selflessness,” “generosity” or any other mental state that arises in the process. It also provides us with an opportunity to develop gracefulness when making an offering. For some gracefulness while giving comes naturally, and brings much happiness, others need to develop it.



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Template: C:\Documents and Settings\Mark\Application  
Data\Microsoft\Templates\Normal.dot  
Title:  
Subject:  
Author: jbedard  
Keywords:  
Comments:  
Creation Date: 5/4/2008 8:28 PM  
Change Number: 2  
Last Saved On: 5/4/2008 8:28 PM  
Last Saved By: mf  
Total Editing Time: 2 Minutes  
Last Printed On: 5/7/2008 8:58 PM  
As of Last Complete Printing  
Number of Pages: 10  
Number of Words: 1,756 (approx.)  
Number of Characters: 10,012 (approx.)