

Spanda School
Silent Retreat Guidelines
Honeyeater Ridge, 43 Mallee Fowl Way, Margaret River

Purpose of Retreat

This retreat is to give us the much, much needed space away from the stress and unhealthy conditioning of normal life. Its highest intention is to reconnect us with the spiritual heart, which is our true self & real nature - an absolute background of stillness. By giving us space from everyday life in which we are typically disconnected from the truth of our Being, we have a better chance to realise what we really are. In the harmonious and supportive environment of retreat, the teachings and practice have better space to seed and blossom. You can expect months of strong benefits to echo after such an experience. Each of us is invited to taste what it is like to live with an open heart.

Why Meditation?

In a meditation retreat, we come to enjoy meditation & to explore a meditation practice.

But why would one want to enjoy meditation and have a chance to explore a meditation practice?

Because we need support. We need help.

In a meditation retreat, you have healthy food, a lot of free time and space, time to rest, time to be still, time to balance, breathe fresh air and harmonize sleep cycles.

But what happens when you leave the retreat? What happens when you leave the yoga class, healing session, or wellness workshop?

After you leave, you probably won't continue to have healthy food prepared for you, at optimal times, with mindfulness and love. Gone is the space to balance, sleep, be still, or breathe fresh air.

We can't depend on outer conditions to keep us health, happy and in harmony.

More severely, we cannot depend on outer conditions for mental clarity, and inner peace.

How do we get unwavering peace of mind - regardless of the circumstances?

Meditation.

We can take meditation home from the retreat. We can take meditation anywhere, and it doesn't need to be in a classical or rigid format. In the end, Meditation is unwavering peace of mind - regardless of the circumstances.

About the Venue

Water

Honeyeater Ridge, like all homes in the area, relies on rain water, so please use water mindfully. In summer, we provide buckets in all the showers to collect the water as the shower comes to your desired temperature. We would love you to choose a favourite plant and give it your excess water when you're finished.

Using the dishwasher usually uses less water than washing up. You don't need to rinse the dishes, just scrape them off and put them in the dishwasher.

Septic Toilet System

Please use the little bins provided next to the toilets. Septic systems can't process sanitary items, etc. and can become blocked (that can really spoil your stay!).

Bush Awareness

The bush is beautiful, and full of life. This is a part of Australia where snakes are found. Be mindful.

Many bobtail lizards live near the house and often come up onto the verandah in summer. They are our 'friends'. Please keep the screen door to the house shut, and also the door to the cottage, as they will try to come inside.

First aid kit

There is a first aid kit in the pantry in the kitchen

What to Bring:

1. **Flashlight** - for going to the bathroom at night.
2. **Umbrella/ Rain Coat/ Warm clothes / Layers/ Meditation Shawl or blanket** - the body temperature drops during meditation. Bring layers to be warm.
3. **Personal items** - toiletries, changes of clothes.
4. **Towels** are provided.
5. **Water bottle** - no glass bottles please, they are a hazard in the yoga hall.
6. **Notebook and pen** - Journaling and writing will be a part of this retreat. Please do not bring any books to read.

What NOT to bring:

1. **Please do not bring your computer or any electronic devices.** The retreat is meant to be entirely unplugged. If you'd like us to hold your mobile phones you can hand them in or keep it on Airplane mode, switched off and tucked away. There will come moments of weakness where you will feel called to distract or externalise by using mobile devices. Support yourself in advance by handing in any devices.
2. **Any books of alternate reading material.** This is a time to sit with your thoughts, emotions and physical body exactly as it is, without reading about it, trying to learn or fix the body. Being present for these days is all that's required. Any other material, topics, books, lectures will serve as a distraction.
3. **Perfumes, Make up, Jewellery.** There will be no need to use mirrors and decorate the body in any way. Consider this as an isolated cave retreat; although we get the benefit of group support, intention and energy - there will be no outwardly group contact of any kind. No eye contact, gestures or talking.

4. **Provocative Dress.** Please dress down in comfortable, appropriate and modest clothing.

Sitting Meditation & Breaks

This retreat skilfully blends a therapeutic emphasis on caring for the body *with* the practice of transcending the body, as well as the mind. There are not many strong meditation retreats which also blend 2 yoga practices daily. We also take breaks between sitting meditation practices to stretch out and either continue the meditation while stretching or laying, or to fully break and go for a walk. Sitting meditation is entirely different from laying down due to the vertical or horizontal nature of the spine as well as the vast difference between the Yin and Yang posture. **There are no exceptions during sitting meditation for anyone to be laying down.** Disregarding the structure and intention of meditation would be unsupportive for the individual and group in regards to our aim of vigilance and strength to choose Truth and presence over unconscious stories.

Schedule, Sitting Meditation and Other Issues

The evolution of the human mind has led to the miraculous development of modern day society. Its nature is to evaluate, judge, improve and plan ahead. The issue nowadays is that our whole identity and experienced is lived in hypothetical projections, disconnected from the intimacy, connect and depth of Presence.

During this retreat the nature of the mind to want to improve and judge will become exceedingly and sometimes painfully obvious. Our practice is to **detach from the mind**. The mind will **still function**, however we need not purchase every single story, wish & desire of the mind. What would serve us best, in retreat and in our lives, is to rather find a new, inner position (of acceptance & presence) that is not invested in the minds stories.

The retreat is designed with your best interests at heart. To support all your best qualities to come forth: clarity, strength, compassion, awareness. But also to support the group as a whole so that we all may ride an awesome, collective wave of energy towards new depths of meditation.

Your mind is most likely a wild monkey constantly affirming its own “good ideas” of why it would be beneficial to miss a session, lay down when you start to feel sore, use your phone, or any other disregard of the guidelines. This not only lessons your strength and reduces the effectiveness of this mindful space we have provided you, but also takes away from the energy and support of the group. It also takes from the retreat facilitators who then need to use time and energy to either police you or bring your energy back into alignment. **Please know there are no alterations whatsoever from these guidelines.** This is a fantastic training away from ‘believing’ all the stories of the mind. Following the guidelines of this retreat will

bring you the strength to stand up for a deeper Truth when the mind starts to 'molest you' outside of the retreat.

Sleep Cycles

You will notice a difference in the sleeping cycles. Generally, Ava advises to sleep much less, and to rest much more. There will be frequent rest period where it is not advised to aim for a deep sleep or even nap, but rest the body, mind and the need to 'do anything'. If you fall asleep that's ok.

Take it as a gift and a reprogramming to rise & sleep earlier. Start your day with gratitude well before the first meditation starts. Accept that the body and mind are tired and this retreat setting might reveal that to you. This is not a problem, nothing is. It is only an invitation to know and cherish yourself exactly the way you are, and then check in what the next step would be to serve you best. These 4 days can serve to reset unhealthy habits that we may not have had the willpower to change prior.

Often we stress about sleeping around the clock in conscious and unconscious ways. These stresses impede the sleep process. Avoid planning, worrying or expecting sleep in your normal ways and you'll see that sleep will come easier and more efficiently without the mind's pseudo-control.

Sitting Postures

It is highly recommended to be as comfortable as possible in the meditation periods. It is imperative in a strong meditation practice to keep the back and spine straight and vertical. However for most people this needs to be balanced with the comfort and acceptance of their body in its current state. We advise use of chairs, cushions, props and supports to keep the back straight and body comfortable.

Questions

Questions and concerns can be communicated by notes to Arooza or Ava, and questions about the practice and teachings are recommended and will be answered in a special Q & A session daily.

Setting Intention

One of the most powerful thing we can do before any action, and before any self-practice is set an intention. When we initiate the action with a focus of intention, we benefit from an alignment of all our forces & energy - Mind, Body, Emotions, Spirit.

If you're ever having difficulty come back to this very simple question: "Whats my intention?" Allow the simple **present moment intention**, or Divine will, to arise within you. Acknowledge it and move forward.

Support

There is a great deal of support being offered during the retreat setting. Half from within, half from without. There is a great deal of support coming from yourself (body/mind), in response to your decision to come and spend these days in stillness. The subconscious forces are rallied and prepared for all the efforts and events you will traverse in these days. Know there is loving support from the leaders and from the group to be there and accept you as you embrace any challenges that may arise. Please contact the leaders through notes if you need help or have questions. Trust in your own capacities, the means of the retreat are well, well within your abilities as a human Being.

Individual Practice

There will be plenty of time for 'individual practice' during the retreat. This includes: Journalling, stretching, walking, meditation, resting, breathing, contemplation, yoga, tai chi/qi gong, movement or fitness. This is another chance to reset us towards some healthy listening in to what the body needs, rather than what we think we should be doing or are told to do. These burdens may have been placed on us during our normal lives, this is a chance to rest, be free and check in to the bodies healing wisdom.

Meditation Guidelines

What is meditation

It has such a broad understanding, we could almost liken it to the term 'exercise'. Exercise can be used keep the body healthy, the systems harmonious, blood circulating, lungs expelling. Maybe we want to be beautiful, healthy or fit. Exercise could be used for competitive reasons or to accumulate self-worth. Or perhaps to cure an illness, or give relief from a disease. Exercise can be used to support pain-management.

Usually exercise refers to making the physical body healthy.

Similarly, meditation serves so many agendas. And it can be defined by what its intended out come is. Why we are doing meditation defines what meditation is more or less. There are too many to list here. From gross, to subtle. From releasing toxins and stress in the nervous system and disease in the physical body, to relieving stress and disease in the mind. Meditation makes the mind sharp, clear, creative. Meditation refines our consciousness to be non-reactive, non judgemental (accepting & in flow). Perhaps you've heard of 'flow states' where human beings can entire into a superior way of functioning (cognitively and physically) by submitting themselves to a high state of consciousness where they are no longer the 'doer'. This is closer to the ancient use of meditation - a way of revealing the truth of our being, what we really are. Because beyond a fluctuating set of thoughts and beliefs, or body,

what are we? Realising the truth beyond an abstract philosophy, has been the ultimate form, or agenda, of meditation across the ages.

Generally, meditation refers to making the mind, emotions and consciousness healthy.

With exercise, while its more profound use is to keep the human being healthy, happy, energised and balanced, it could be used for more superficial reasons - competition, image or ego-power. Similarly with meditation, although it could be used to clear the busy mind, or calm agitated systems, its more profound use is to recognise the absolute freedom that is ever present within us. This freedom and peace of what we are is somehow deeply obscured by conditioning, personal wants and beliefs about what we are.

How to meditate

In the end meditation is an expansion, and meditation is letting go.

Experiment: Sit right now with the eyes closed and try to bring a sensation of expansion and letting go. What does it feel like? You just meditated! Great job!

There are 2 main obstacles to meditation.

The first is discomfort in the physical body, the second is discomfort in the mind.

- 1) Physical Body: Its a long story here. But in short ask yourself why the body is uncomfortable? Ask yourself what would it take to sit comfortably- and do it. There are short and long term approaches to bring the body to health and harmony. Do both. Ask your yoga & meditation teacher, and ask your friends. It is your responsibility to develop the capacity to sit comfortably. *Hints: USE A CHAIR. Use props, cushions, blankets to slowly make your way to a more adept sitting ability. Sit in a chair. Try a chair. Do warm up exercises for the troublesome places before you sit.*
- 2) I believe the discomfort in the mind comes from one main misunderstanding: There are two OPPOSITE practices that are confused for meditation. And maybe only our ignorance about what we are meant to be doing, makes the meditation session difficult. Concentration vs Meditation. Concentration is a contraction of our energies, focusing in on one thing. Clenching the reins on our mind and bringing it back, again, and again, and again, and again. And back to lunch, and bring it back. And back to a conversation, back to the future, back outside the moment, and we bring it back. Concentration takes an effort, and we only have a finite amount of energy to concentrate with. Spend as much time concentrating as you possibly can, but don't expect your efforts to exceed your abilities and your energy. Eventually you'll have to let go of the concentration practice. It is hard while were doing it, and a relief when we stop. Like weight lifting! Its a skill that needs to be built up.

Meditation is the opposite of concentration. Meditation is a relaxation and a letting of of all efforts. Where concentrating is a concerted effort towards one thing. Meditation

is a letting go of all things. Softening, opening. When the contraction of the mind returns moment after moment, we let go, most of the time - into an 'object of meditation'. Something that expands and softens us. Like the heart!

There's only one thing that's Difficult = resisting what is. The only way to resist what is, is to think about. Meditation is about letting go.

Meditation is two things. Relaxation & Freedom.
Keep this as your mantra. Relaxation & Freedom.

When tension or thoughts or problems arise again, Relaxation. Freedom.

I'll tell you how to do each one.

How to relax, as a technique for meditation: Relaxation is breathing, and softening the body. Scanning your body parts and letting them go. Scanning the emotions, breathing into them and letting them go. Stepping into the witness of the thoughts, breathing, relaxing, and letting them go. I'll tell you one thing which makes it a lot easier to let go of the thoughts, however it will work a lot better when you realise it for yourself. None of your thoughts are true. Truth by definition is something which does change. Your thoughts are not true. Your thoughts are subjective, personal, subject to change and most of the time psychotic or beneficial, I promise you with all my heart, you can let them go. With this, we deeply relax.

What about freedom? How to 'do' freedom as a technique for meditation.

Freedom is that freedom from needing to think about anything, or hold stress or stagnant chi, passed experiences or traumas in the body. I'll tell you the quickest, best and most transformative way to practice freedom.

Come back to the heart.

Drop your entire consciousness into the heart space. At Spanda we teach you all about the heart space, from a medical and physiology standpoint, how it changes your biochemistry as well as the electro-magnetic field around the body. The emotional effects, keeping our sense and understanding of love, connection, truth, bliss & freedom. And the more subtle effects on mind, that the mind actually transforms to let in more freedom, more truth, when the thoughts are sublimated into the gravity of the heart space. *Try it.* Give it 5 seconds, 5 minutes or 5 years, and your life will drastically transform.

Poetry & Quotes

Adyashanti

The most important thing is that we come to meditation with an open attitude, an attitude that is truly innocent, by which I mean an attitude that is not coloured by the past.

When most people sit down to meditate the first thing they think is " Okay how do i control my mind?"

How am I going to peace? How am i going to come to stillness? What the mind is actually doing is asking, "How do i control myself so that I feel better?"

Real meditation is not about mastering a technique, its about letting go control. This is meditation, everything else is concentration.

True meditation is actually a means of investigation

We are not just asking any old questions; we are asking questions that have the power to penetrate through layers of conditioning to reach our essential nature”

“With techniques, people end up with what is simply a discipline. They end up watching their breathe for years and years and years, becoming perfect at watching their breathe. But in the ed spirituality is not about watching the breath. Its about waking up from the dream of separateness to the truth affinity.

Notice the peace and stillness we are trying to attain is already here. All we have to do is stop trying to attain it.

Sweet Crushed Angel

Hafiz

You have not danced so badly, my dear,
Trying to hold hands with the Beautiful One.

You have waltzed with great style,
My sweet, crushed angel,
To have ever neared God’s heart at all.

Our Partner is notoriously difficult to follow,
And even His best musicians are not always easy
To hear.

So what if the music has stopped for a while.
So what
If the price of admission to the Divine
Is out of reach tonight.

So what, my dear,
If you do not have the ante to gamble for Real Love.
The mind and the body are famous
For holding the heart ransom,

But Hafiz knows the Beloved’s eternal habits.
Have patience,
For He will not be able to resist your longing

For Long.

You have not danced so badly, my dear,
Trying to kiss the Beautiful One.

You have actually waltzed with tremendous style,
O my sweet,
O my sweet crushed angel.

Find A Better Job

Hafiz

Now
That
All your worry
Has proved such an
Unlucrative
Business,
Why
Not
Find a better
Job.

Nirvana Shaktkam (the 6 stanzas of liberation)

Adi Shankaracharya

1) I am not mind, nor intellect, nor ego,
nor the reflections of inner self (chitta). [more]
I am not the five senses. [more]
I am beyond that.
I am not the ether, nor the earth,
nor the fire, nor the wind (the five elements).
I am indeed,
That eternal knowing and bliss, Shiva,
love and pure consciousness.

2) Neither can I be termed as energy (prana),
nor five types of breath (vayus), [more]
nor the seven material essences, [more]
nor the five coverings (pancha-kosha). [more]
Neither am I the five instruments of elimination,
procreation, motion, grasping, or speaking. [more]
I am indeed,
That eternal knowing and bliss, Shiva,
love and pure consciousness.

3) I have no hatred or dislike,
nor affiliation or liking,
nor greed,
nor delusion,
nor pride or haughtiness,
nor feelings of envy or jealousy.

I have no duty (dharma),
nor any money,
nor any desire (kama),
nor even liberation (moksha).

I am indeed,
That eternal knowing and bliss, Shiva,
love and pure consciousness.

4) I have neither merit (virtue),
nor demerit (vice).

I do not commit sins or good deeds,
nor have happiness or sorrow,
pain or pleasure.

I do not need mantras, holy places,
scriptures (Vedas), rituals or sacrifices (yagnas).

I am none of the triad of
the observer or one who experiences,
the process of observing or experiencing,
or any object being observed or experienced.

I am indeed,
That eternal knowing and bliss, Shiva,
love and pure consciousness.

5) I do not have fear of death,
as I do not have death.

I have no separation from my true self,
no doubt about my existence,
nor have I discrimination on the basis of birth.

I have no father or mother,
nor did I have a birth.

I am not the relative,
nor the friend,
nor the guru,
nor the disciple.

I am indeed,
That eternal knowing and bliss, Shiva,
love and pure consciousness.

6) I am all pervasive.
I am without any attributes,
and without any form.
I have neither attachment to the world,
nor to liberation (mukti).
I have no wishes for anything
because I am everything,
everywhere,
every time,
always in equilibrium.
I am indeed,
That eternal knowing and bliss, Shiva,
love and pure consciousness.

