

## Practicing Noble Silence

Noble silence is a core piece of Buddhist practice and has been since the time of the Buddha. The primary reason for silence on meditation retreats is to support our meditation practice. Silence helps keep our focus on cultivating mindfulness. Continuity of mindfulness is much easier when we don't talk. The complex interplay of emotions and attitudes involved in most social interactions tend to keep the mind too active and scattered to allow for deep concentration. And this internal activity often lingers. The mental momentum from a conversation is seldom finished when we stop talking. It can take a while for the thinking mind to quiet down after a conversation ends.

For most people, the silence of a retreat creates a space in which they can see themselves more clearly. Rather than being actively distracted by work, relationships, cell phones, music, or various external events, they have an opportunity to notice overlooked feelings and concerns. The sustained periods of silence give people a chance to observe the subtle, important motivations and values behind how they live.

Silence: Once the retreat begins, retreatants agree to limit their talking solely to necessary speech, such as speaking to a teacher during an interview, asking a question during the question and answer sessions, or getting clarification about a yogi job.

Our teachers request that you not engage in other forms of communication while on retreat. Please turn off your cell phones, laptops, iPods, iPads and other communication devices for the duration of the retreat so that you can commit to your retreat wholeheartedly and reap the benefits of that commitment. Noble silence includes not reading, writing, keeping a journal, receiving mail, or otherwise keeping busy and distracted. By leaving at home the many activities and communications that worldly life entails, you offer yourself the gift of stillness.

Retreatants are asked to refrain from visual, verbal, physical contact and written communication with each other. If there is truly something urgent that needs to be communicated to another retreatant, you can leave a note for the retreat manager.

Communicating with the retreat manager is to be done through notes, or if truly urgent, then take steps to speak in a place where you cannot be heard by other retreatants.

Communicating with a teacher is to only be done in the Dharma Hall during question and answer sessions, in interviews, through notes or if truly urgent in a place where you cannot be heard by other retreatants. Please limit notes to the teachers to situations where something is troubling and you need more immediate assistance. The teachers may not be able to respond to notes about practice questions. The question and answer sessions and interviews are the appropriate time for such questions.

Notes: There is a bulletin board where urgent notes can be left for the retreat manager and the teachers. Use discretion before leaving a note and mindfully consider whether it is necessary. Notes can be a distraction for the person writing the note and the recipient.

Movement: Please do not do movement practices outside of the designated areas, as it can be a distraction for retreatants doing sitting or walking meditation.

Lying Down/Sleeping If you are tired and feel the need to lay down or to sleep, do this in your room. Vipassana is a practice of wakefulness, and the energy of people lying down or sleeping in meditation areas can affect those doing sitting or walking meditation.

***Please take it kindly if we need to approach you regarding these or other reminders.***