

Practicing Noble Silence on Retreat

The practice of Noble Silence is an important part of our tradition, benefitting ourselves and everyone on the retreat. When we intentionally and collectively align with this practice, it creates the conditions that support a continuity of mindfulness. This continuity leads to greater understanding and peace.

Noble Silence

Practicing Noble Silence means that we don't talk to one another on retreat, except during question and answer sessions or meetings with the teachers. It also means that we don't communicate with each other in non-verbal ways, such as making eye contact or using hand gestures to get someone's attention.

This includes not communicating with others outside the retreat using your cell phone or computer. Your contact person should call St. Anthony if there is an emergency; their staff will make sure you get the message.

Please make an effort to maintain silence, for the benefit of yourself and others. Notice when you feel the need to communicate something and check if the communication is really necessary.

In case of an emergency, feel free to communicate as appropriate, including speaking to the person involved, calling out for help and dialing 911.

Electronic Devices

As a way to deepen into the Noble Silence, the teaching team strongly encourages the practice of relinquishing use of electronic devices, including but not limited to cell phones, laptop computers, and tablets for the duration of retreat. The devices can be held and kept in a safe location throughout the duration of the retreat by the retreat coordinator.

Although these devices are immensely useful in our daily lives, they can also be a contributor to a restless and distracted mind which can impact one's continuity of awareness on retreat. In letting go of use of these devices, it's possible to more closely attend to both the inner and outer experience that is unfolding with a greater degree of sensitivity.

On the Bulletin Board

Questions or requests for the retreat manager or teacher can usually be communicated with a note on the bulletin board. (If your request is complicated, it may be easier to speak quietly to the manager or teacher.) Use discretion before leaving a note and consider whether it's necessary. There's no need to leave notes expressing thanks or gratitude during the retreat.

Please don't leave notes for other yogis. If there's truly something urgent that needs to be communicated to another yogi, leave a note for the retreat manager.

There will be opportunities for you to ask the teachers about your practice during question and answer sessions and meetings with the teachers. Limit notes to the teachers to situations where something is troubling and you need immediate assistance. Be sure to sign your note so that the manager or teachers can respond to you.

In the Meditation Hall

Enter the hall quietly and pay attention to your movements. Be aware of the presence of the others and try to move in such a way that you create minimal disturbance.

The meditation hall is reserved for sitting and standing meditation only. Refrain from doing walking meditation, yoga or other movement practices here.

If you're tired and feel the need to lay down or sleep, you should do this in your room. Vipassana is a practice of wakefulness, and the energy of people lying down or sleeping in meditation areas (including walking rooms or outside spaces where people are walking) can negatively affect the practice of others.