

Heart Awakening Retreat Guidelines

Please read these retreat guidelines carefully, even if you have previously attended a Hridaya or other silent meditation retreat.

To support deep inner stillness, clarity, and sincerity of practice, we ask all participants to follow the guidelines below for the full duration of the retreat. These agreements are not arbitrary rules; they are part of the container that allows the retreat environment to support everyone's inner work. When held collectively, they help create a calm, focused, and respectful atmosphere for all.

1. Voluntary restraint

A meditation retreat is an uncommon situation: people live together simply, orienting daily life around inner practice rather than personal preferences. We relate to one another primarily through shared silence and practice, with all its challenges and insights. To do this harmoniously, we agree to a few essential conventions: mindful silence, consideration for others, keeping to the schedule, and following the offered guidance.

2. Mauna (noble silence)

Participants are asked to observe silence for the entire period of consecrated practice. This includes refraining from speaking, gesturing, passing notes, or communicating with one another in any form.

Silence conserves energy and supports mental quiet. When speech stops, the mind often becomes louder at first; staying with this is an important part of the practice. Over time, many discover a deep sense of calm and clarity that silence makes possible.

You may communicate with the retreat facilitator at any time by writing if you have questions, concerns, or practical needs. Practice-related questions can be submitted in writing and will be addressed during evening Q&A sessions or privately if appropriate. All logistical matters—including those related to food or facilities—should also be directed to the facilitator, who will pass them on as needed.

Part of silence is also refraining from judging, comparing, or projecting onto others. Cultivating self-discipline and kindness—toward yourself and the group—is an integral part of the retreat.

3. Electronics and media

Please do not use phones, computers, or other devices during the retreat. This includes news, music, emails, messaging, calls, or internet use. Phones may be kept on airplane mode if needed as an alarm clock. This break from external input is essential to the retreat process.

4. Reading

Reading is not permitted during the retreat, including spiritual or inspirational material. The intention is to turn attention inward as fully as possible. Reading tends to diffuse focus and can subtly pull attention away from direct experience. You will receive all necessary guidance during the retreat, and there will be time to read again once it concludes.

5. An attitude of solitude

Participants are asked to maintain an inner and outer sense of solitude. This includes refraining from eye contact, smiling, greeting (even nonverbally), physical contact, or social gestures. Sexual abstinence is also part of this agreement.

While this may feel unfamiliar at first, it strongly supports interiorization. A quiet sense of shared presence often emerges, rooted in mutual respect for silence and personal space.

6. Clothing and personal care

Please bring modest, comfortable clothing suitable for meditation and gentle movement. Avoid perfume or strongly scented products, as others may be sensitive to smells or find them distracting.

7. Detox agreements

No alcohol, smoking, or recreational substances are permitted during the retreat. Coffee and caffeinated drinks are also not served. This period is intended as a detox for both body and mind. If this feels challenging, support is available—please speak with the facilitator.

8. Meditation journal

You are encouraged to keep a simple retreat journal to note reflections or experiences related to practice. This can help you stay present through difficulties and serve as a meaningful reference later. Please note that letter writing, planning, or creative writing is discouraged, as it pulls the mind away from the retreat's purpose.

9. Following the schedule

The daily schedule is moderate and balanced, including meditation, hatha yoga, and teachings or Q&A. Participants are expected to attend all sessions. This is not a drop-in retreat.

Please arrive on time for all activities. Late arrivals and unexplained absences are disruptive to the group and should be avoided. If something arises, speak with the facilitator in advance.

10. Food and meals

Food is not to be eaten in meditation spaces or bedrooms. Water, tea, or similar drinks may be kept in sealed containers and used only during designated break times. Meals are served at set times, and participants are responsible for washing their own dishes afterward.

These guidelines exist for the benefit of the whole group. Before committing to the retreat, please reflect honestly on whether you are willing to fully respect these agreements. Participants who choose to leave early or are asked to leave due to repeated disregard for the guidelines will not be eligible for a refund.

Thank you for your care and commitment to the shared field of practice.