

HINTS FOR MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR RETREAT

SpiritRest Retreat is designed for you to take the time you need to renew and restore yourself. ***Always keep in mind that you are the best person to decide what you need and how to spend this precious time in this beautiful setting.*** But here are a few hints, based on the experience of those of us who have done many retreats.

The key elements of a spiritual retreat, according to Rabbi David A. Cooper, are silence, simplicity and solitude. These elements of a retreat are what allow you to really *retreat* from the business and distraction of our ordinary lives. Educator and theologian Parker Palmer reminds us that ***the soul is a shy animal.*** What he means by that is that our deeper wisdoms and longings need a calm, quiet atmosphere to arise, and to be heard above the noise of our hyperactive culture.

Suggested Practice: Silence Your Electronics

SpiritRest is a silent retreat. That means that from after dinner on Sunday night until Friday morning, we ask you not to talk, except to your spiritual director and to ask questions during our teaching sessions. Making telephone calls will break the deep stillness that silence will allow as well. We think it is wise to apply that silence to your electronics too. Try not checking your Facebook or email, or watching videos and listening to music. Maybe that will be hard for you to do. Then it might be good for you to notice how attached you are to these distractions; how you suffer without them. It could give you a better understanding of how you are served by electronic media and how you much of your time and energy is dissipated by these obsessions.

Suggested Practice: Read to Nourish the Spirit

You may also want to explore not reading for recreation but instead not reading at all, or perhaps using this time to get to the spiritual books that you haven't gotten around to. Your leaders will be making some of their favorite spiritual reading available.

You have invested time and expense to make your life simpler for this week. You are taking time away from your work and/ or other responsibilities in order to focus on your inward growth and renewal. We are taking care of many of the ordinary cares and responsibilities of life, like cooking, cleaning, driving, and appointments. That can take care of a lot of small or large worries and anxieties, so you can focus on your spiritual work.

Being on a silent retreat gives you a sense of solitude, even among others. It takes a lot of energy to speak and listen. During this retreat you can allow that energy to work inwardly, which produces amazing insights and experiences.

Will you be bored? Maybe. A student complained to the 20th Century Indian sage Nisargadatta that everyday life seemed boring to him. The sage replied, “You’ve done the most amazing thing! You’ve made life boring.” ***Many of us are so used to intense experiences at work and in our entertainment that we are addicted to the sensational.*** It may feel uncomfortable not having those distractions at hand.

But as the silence settles in, you will likely find that there is so much beauty and wonder in the ordinary things of life that we usually miss.

You leaders are eagerly looking forward to welcoming you to SpiritRest. We will be available to you to help your retreat be the best experience possible.

Blessings,
Arvid Straube
SpiritRest’s Lead Spiritual Director