

WHAT TO BRING AND EXPECT AT A MADISON VIPASSANA, INC. RETREAT:

Location: Directions to the Holy Wisdom Monastery, Middleton, WI, are available on their website at <http://benedictinewomen.org/>. This is a smoke free facility. If you must smoke, please use the areas designated by the Monastery.

Arrival for the retreat: If you are arriving on Saturday morning, please arrive to check in between 8:15 and 8:45 a.m. The formal retreat begins at 9:00 a.m.

What to Wear or Bring:

Clothing: Wear loose fitting, comfortable clothing for sitting, warm outer wear for outdoor walking, and you may want a blanket to put over your shoulders or on your lap while meditating. Since it will be summer and the retreat center is in a natural area, you may want to bring sun glasses, sun hat, sun screen and/or insect repellent.

Please avoid the use of perfumes or any strong smelling soaps or cosmetics as some people may be allergic to such things.

Essentials: If you are staying overnight you might want an alarm clock, a flashlight, shampoo, toothbrush, etc. Towels and bed linen will be provided.

Meditation cushion, zabuton or blanket, or bench. Chairs will be available for those not wishing to sit on the floor. A few zafus will be available. Please bring your own zafu and blanket or zabuton for under you zafu, if you have one.

Meals: Vegetarian lunches will be served. If you have special dietary needs, please contact the registrar. We are not able to accommodate special diets, but can explain what flexibility is available.

Questions: Prior to the retreat call Julie Meyer, (608)-231-1558, during the retreat talk to the retreat manager..

Retreat schedule: The schedule of retreat activities will be posted and will involve meditation instruction, 45 minute periods of sitting meditation alternating with periods of walking meditation, and talks by the teacher. We ask that you follow the schedule as closely as possible to get the maximum benefit from the retreat.

Noble Silence: In keeping with Buddhist traditions, the retreat will be held in silence, except where it is absolutely necessary to speak. Please avoid eye contact or other forms of non-verbal communication. This will help minimize distractions so that each person can conserve energy for the work of meditation. As a part of noble silence we also suggest that you refrain from reading, writing and the use of any other media during the retreat.

Please plan not to make or receive phone calls during the retreat except for emergencies. There will be a bulletin board for necessary communication with the teacher or the retreat managers. Also please remember to turn off alarms on electronic watches.

Sitting: Please remove your shoes before entering the meditation hall. Please be on time for group sittings and stay for the entire period. Please do not bring food or drink into the meditation hall.

Five Training Precepts: We ask that you observe the tradition and the spirit of the Five Training Precepts during the time of the retreat. It is a way of maintaining a basic purity of body, speech and mind.

Non-harming: Honoring and respecting all sentient beings (including insects), and not acting out of hatred or aversion in such a way as to cause harm to any living being.

Non-stealing: not taking that which is not freely given, respecting the property of all beings.

Refraining from false speech: Speaking only what is true and useful, speaking wisely, responsibly, and appropriately. In the context of this retreat this involves keeping noble silence.

Refraining from sexual misconduct: In the context of this retreat, this means refraining from all sexual activity.

Refraining from the use of intoxicants: Abstaining from the use of alcohol or other non-prescription drugs.

Dana: In the Pali language, which was spoken at the time of the Buddha, *dana* means “generosity” or “gift giving”. It is intrinsic to the 2500 year Buddhist tradition that the teachings are considered priceless and are thus offered freely by the teacher as a form of *dana*. The early teachers, who were monks or nuns received no payment for their instruction. In turn, the lay community saw to it that the basic needs of food clothing and shelter were provided for the teachers.

Beyond this practical dimension, *dana* also plays a crucial role in spiritual life. It is the first of the ten *paramis* or qualities of character to be perfected in many lifetimes. When the Buddha would give a discourse to lay people he would almost always begin with the importance of generosity.

The act of giving itself is of immeasurable benefit to the giver, for it opens the heart, diminishing one’s self-absorption, and places value on the well-being of others. The simple gesture of offering a flower, a kind thought or a simple meal is in itself a sincere form of practice. The size or value of the gift is not important.

Continuing this tradition today, the teachers do not ask for any payment for leading a retreat. They are supported by voluntary contributions from the retreat participants. The fee you paid for this retreat covers the cost of the room, meals, use of the facility, organizational costs, and the teacher’s transportation, room and meals. At the end of the retreat there will be an opportunity to offer *dana* to the teacher. There is no suggested amount, each person gives what is comfortable. Please remember that as we depend on the teachers they depend on us.

May you have a good retreat.