



Welcome! | Making a Home Retreat

WELCOME TO SICILY!

Welcome to the Masseria San Giovanni Sgadari, in the heart of Sicily. Thank you for joining this online version of the *Art of Being* retreat.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RETREAT

Transformational growth and insight require that we attend deeply to what is happening within us and how we are relating to our world. That kind of deep attending requires the time and space to truly settle into stillness and quiet. Retreat is a state of mind, a process, a commitment to deeper exploration. It is not dependent upon place. Physically going on retreat removes us from our everyday environment, but does not guarantee our commitment to the process. A home retreat requires us be intentional in the ways we carve out space and time from our daily routines, interactions, and habitual patterns.

STRUCTURE & SCHEDULE

Retreat asks us to examine anew our relationship to time. Setting a structure and schedule to your retreat will allow you to let go of clock time and drop into a deeper sense of being that lies beyond time. It also allows you to define and balance the time commitments you would like to make in your retreat.

- Adjust the suggested retreat schedule to fit your needs and circumstances.
- Post your schedule in a visible location to remind yourself and let others know when and why you might not be available.
- Make a list of any upcoming life or work commitments and the necessary arrangements to address them beforehand.
- Discuss your schedule and intentions for your retreat with others in your household so they can be supportive and aware.

DISCONNECT

Disconnecting digitally is an important part of retreat. Email, media, texts... even visible notifications can have a strong effect on us. Consider these steps during your retreat:

- Set an autoreply on your e-mail so others will know to not expect a reply from you.
- Turn your phone off, on airplane mode, or turn notifications off. If circumstances require you to stay connected, designate a time to check for important notifications.
- When viewing our course materials, open a separate browser window with only the course tab open. Turn off computer notifications and resist the urge to research topics that come up during the retreat.

MEDITATION PRACTICE

Sitting meditation can be done on a meditation cushion, meditation bench, or on a chair. Create a space where you will have relative quiet and lack of disturbances to do the practices, though silence is by no means a requirement for meditation. Treat this as a sacred space – as the container for your retreat experience. Create a small shrine with candles, incense, and any objects that represent your intentions for this retreat.

- There is no need to sit in front of the screen during meditation sessions, as long as you are in hearing range of the guidance. You may also download and use the audio files.
- Try doing the practices without the guidance after you have been introduced to them. Use an app, such as Insight Timer, to time your non-guided meditation sessions, so that you do not need to keep track of time.

ART SPACE & MATERIALS

Likewise, set aside a space – even a corner of a table, where you will do the art experiences. What is important is the intention that this space embodies and holds for you. There are no particular materials requirements, however, you may want to have a basic assortment of materials ready to work with, such as:

- A sketchbook or journal
- Drawing paper and/or mixed-media paper if you plan to work with water-based materials
- An assortment of drawing media: pencils, pens, charcoal, pastels
- Wet media – paint, ink, watercolor, brushes

THE ART OF BEING VIEW OF ART

The intention and purpose of the Art Experiences is grounded in these three core beliefs about art:

1. Everyone is an artist
2. Art is an expression of our authentic self
3. Mindfulness creates a space where authentic artistic expression can arise

This will be looked at more fully in Day 1. The exercises are intended to nurture a personal connection to artistic expression and meaning-making that is rooted in one's own human experience. While skills and techniques are important, focusing on them before a genuine connection and motivation is instilled places the cart before the horse. This course is about igniting the energy of the horse!

SILENCE AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Silence is an important element of retreat, though not always possible in a home setting. Try building a period of silence into your schedule – perhaps an hour before bed until the end of breakfast in the morning. Invite others at home to join you. Through this practice, we are able to see how many layers of communication – both internal and external – we are continually engaging with, and the amount of mental and emotional activity they can trigger in us.

Decide what parameters of conversation, social engagement, and silence you wish to set for your

retreat, and then let others around you know in order to avoid misunderstandings.

LIVE COHORT RETREAT GROUPS

If you are taking this program as part of a Live Cohort Retreat Program, you will receive an email with session times and links. Be sure to build these sessions into your retreat schedule. If you would like to join one, go to onlineprograms.art-of-being.org or email info@art-of-being.org for more information.

LIVE PROGRAMS IN SICILY

Ready to experience the magic of San Giovanni Sgadari in person? As an online participant, you will find a voucher for our next live Art of Being program in Sicily – an expression of gratitude for joining this mindful art community of practice.

SUGGESTED READING LIST

Study can play an important role in retreat. You may choose to build a study hour into your schedule. Like conversation and media, reading can create a great deal of mental activity, when an intention of retreat is to allow the mind to settle so we can drop more deeply into sensing and being. If you choose to incorporate study, it is suggested that you read material relevant to the retreat, reading shorter passages, contemplating them, and allowing them to filter down into your being as you practice and make art. Here are some relevant suggested readings:

Allen, Pat B. *Art Is a Spiritual Path*. Shambhala Publications, 2005.

---. *Art Is a Way of Knowing*. Shambhala Publications, 1995.

Botton, Alain De. *The Art of Travel*. Vintage, 2008.

Hanh, Thich Nhat *Peace Is Every Step*. Bantam, 1992.

---. *How to Walk*. Parallax Press, 2015.

Kabat-Zinn, Jon. *Coming to Our Senses*. Hyperion, 2006.

---. *Wherever You Go, There You Are*. Hachette Books, 2009.

London, Peter. *Drawing Closer to Nature*. Shambhala Publications, 2003.

---. *No More Secondhand Art*. Shambhala Publications, 1989.

Loori, John Daido. *The Zen of Creativity*. Ballantine Books, 2007.

Suzuki, Shunryu. *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. Shambhala Publications, 2010.

Trungpa, Chogyam. *True Perception*. Shambhala Publications, 2008.