

Home Retreat

A Householder's Vinaya

offered by Allan Cooper
nama2rupa@gmail.com

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa.
Homage to the Blessed One, the Perfected One, the Fully
Self-Enlightened One.

Table of contents:

- I. Preface on page 3.
- II. Preparation for the Home Retreat
 - a. Home Retreat Essentials on page 4.
 - b. How a Home Retreat Differs from a Formal Retreat on page 6.
 - c. Who Can Benefit from Home Retreat on page 6.
 - d. Foundational Readings for Home Retreat on page 7.
 - e. Practice Emphasis on a Home Retreat on page 10.
 - f. Cultivation of *sampajañña* on page 10.
 - g. Householder's *Vinaya* on page 12.
 - h. Additional Logistics of the Home Retreat on page 16.
 - i. Create Strong Intention on page 24.
 - j. Report to Others on page 24.
- III. Guidance While on Retreat
 - a. Focus on Continuity and Follow-through on page 25.
 - b. Micro Moments Make a Whole on page 26.
 - c. Lead with Strength on page 27.
 - d. Cultivate Wise Flexibility on page 28.
 - e. Pay Attention to Social Contact on page 29.
 - f. Bring Friendly Determination to Practice on page 29.

- g. View Change and the Unexpected as Practice Opportunities on page 31.
 - h. Hindrances and Yogi Mind on page 33.
 - i. Slow Down on page 34.
 - j. Cultivate Right Speech on page 35.
 - k. Pay Attention to Relationship with Food on page 36.
 - l. Investigate Sleep on page 37.
 - m. Use Chanting, Reflection and Determinations on page 38.
 - n. Cultivate Patience and *Metta* on page 40.
 - o. Experiment with Balance on page 40.
 - p. Include Dharma Study on page 41.
 - q. Use Daily and End-of-Retreat Reviews on page 43.
- IV. Conclusions: Seeing the Results of Practice on page 44.
- V. Index
- a. Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Noble Path on page 46.
 - b. Chanting: Paying Homage, Taking Refuge, and the Five and Eight Precepts on pages 46-7.
 - c. Forgiveness Reflection on page 48.
 - d. Meal Chant on page 48.
 - e. Suggested Reading List on pages 48-49.
 - f. Abbreviations on page 49.
 - g. Template for Retreat on pages 49-51.
- VI. Biography on page 51.
- VII. Dana/Donations on page 51.
- VIII. For Free Distribution on page 51.

I. Preface

Home Retreat is when we stop the silent often untenable compromise of trying to fit our spiritual practices into our everyday lives and instead choose to consciously train ourselves toward making our everyday lives just another part of our spiritual life.

Should we commit to that change of perspective Home Retreat is one of the most accessible and useful trainings towards improving that quality of life.

If a householding¹ yogi² aspires to deeper meditative Wisdom, home practice where meditative continuity can occur during everyday life must be seen as a vital part of a spiritual life. Activities at home are not just segments of time when we try to hold our practice together amidst a busy life or seen as just a holding pattern between retreats. Life at home doing our activities of daily living in the context of Home Practice³ and the support of Home Retreat offer us the opportunity to cultivate a skillful lifestyle which will deepen our understanding of our meditative Wisdom.⁴ Like on retreat, our everyday life molds our mental attitudes and provides opportunities for insight to be realized and strengthened or weakened depending on our intention and follow-through. Home life is a time to give greater attention to the development of various types of skillful means (*upāya*)⁵ to be investigated, developed and mastered. It is a time to learn new techniques and a time to explore new ways of applying and testing meditative wisdom in complex real life situations.

¹ *Householding Yogi*: One who is not a monastic, lives a lay life and seeks to train the mind towards enlightenment. allan cooper

² *Yogi*: 1. Theravada: The one who trains in the development of concentration. Person who practices *satipatthana* or *samatha* meditation. Source: Dhamma Dana: Pali English Glossary. 2. Synonym for meditator. allan cooper

³ Home Practice: whatever the practice a meditator might have at home. It could be very focused or loose. The criteria for having a Home Practice is how we hold our meditative life. If we hold our spiritual life as our core we can consider our life as having a Home Practice. One who has a Home Practice is inclined to try and improve themselves with attention to virtue, concentration and wisdom. allan cooper

⁴ Meditative wisdom: Intuitive insights into the Three Characteristics: impermanence, suffering/unsatisfactoriness, and non-self which leads to freedom from unwholesome patterns of mind, speech and action. allan cooper

⁵ Skillful means: *Upāya*; way, means, expedient, stratagem. Buddhist Dictionary, Nyanatiloka.

II. Preparation for the Home Retreat

Home Retreat Essentials

Home Retreat differs in great magnitude from most regular home meditation practice. Many very sincere yogis are able to meditate just once or twice a day because one's focus is primarily geared towards managing the necessities of daily life. Over time, meditation practice becomes a second tier priority and one's habits, preferences and desires increasingly go unobserved, further reconditioning and deepening the blindness of those same habits and patterns.

During Home Retreat the yogi switches those priorities for a prescribed amount of time making the meditation practice the priority and everyday life the practice field. The focus changes from allowing normal habits and patterns of daily life to overcome the intention towards attention, and instead switching the intention into making meditation and reflective living the priority. This switch in focus offers increased opportunities to de-condition and reorient the mind/heart from the habit and pattern of forgetting, which naturally creeps into one's mind and converts the same daily life conditions into a proactive, wholesome effort.

Continuous attention to our meditative goals will support the householding yogi's momentum towards success. Continuous attention leads to patterns of longer periods of attention, and conversely, periods of non-attention lead to more periods of inattention. Inattention undermines our ability to achieve whatever our goal may be. Anyone who has been successful at anything in life knows that it is continuity and perseverance towards the goal combined with a constellation of additional useful mental factors that support strong focus. When we bring mental factors such as investigation

(*dhamma-vicaya*),⁶ concentration (*samādhi*),⁷ effort (*sammā-vāyāma*)⁸ and patience (*khanti*)⁹ to any activity, that activity has a greater potential for success. This is precisely what lay life offers the householding yogi in practical ways. Lay life for a committed yogi is exactly the circumstance to explore the wisdom gained on retreat or during formal everyday practice. Yogis explore and simultaneously learn new facets of those skills *because* one is obliged to apply them in new and complicated circumstances. This is the opportunity to integrate and learn new ways to challenge and deepen meditative skills and wisdom.

The intention to cultivate continuous wholesome (*kusala*)¹⁰ attention is the same whether on a formal residential retreat or at home; the skill set will be different, but the goal and the basic teachings always remain the same. Some of the skills and much of the emphasis will be different but the underlying techniques and goals remain the same. The overview and the bedrock of this practice is the cultivation and realization of the Noble Eightfold Path.¹¹

⁶ Investigation: (*dhamma-vicaya*): 1. Investigation (intention). The Noble Eightfold Path, Bhikkhu Bodhi. Chapter Three. 2. ‘The Way of Mindfulness,’ Soma Thera. Chapter: The Factors of Enlightenment. 3. Investigation is one of the 4 Roads to Power and one of the 4 Predominants of Truth: *dhamma-vicaya*, is one the 7 Factors of Enlightenment. Buddhist Dictionary, Nyanatiloka.

⁷ Concentration (*samādhi*): lit: ‘the (mental) state of being firmly fixed, is the fixing of the mind on a single object. Buddhist Dictionary, Nyanatiloka. 2. The Noble Eightfold Path, Bhikkhu Bodhi. Chapter Eight. Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*).

⁸ Effort/Right Effort: (*sammā-vāyāma*): 1. (Pali: *sannāpādhāna*; is an integral part of the Buddhist path to Enlightenment. Built on the insightful recognition of the arising and non-arising of various mental qualities over time and of our ability to mindfully intervene in these ephemeral qualities, the Four Right Exertions encourage the relinquishment of harmful mental qualities and the nurturing of beneficial mental qualities. 2. SN 45.8 *Maggasamṃyutta*; Connected Discourses on the Path. 3. The Noble Eightfold Path: Way to the End of Suffering.’ ‘*Sammā-vāyāma*,’ Chapter Four. Bhikkhu Bodhi.

⁹ Patience (*khanti*): 1. Forbearance is one of the 10 Perfections (*pārami*). Buddhist Dictionary. Nyanatiloka. 2. Patience is more than forbearance. Patience is a state of mind that allows forgiveness and empathy to arise. It is a state of equipoise in the face of either pleasant or unpleasant. allan cooper. 3. ‘Patience is mentioned immediately after energy in the list of *paramis*. (a) because patience is perfected by energy, as it is said: “The energetic man, by arousing his energy, overcomes the suffering imposed by beings and formations.” ‘The Treatise on the *Paramis*,’ Acariya Dhammapala.

¹⁰ Wholesome(ness) (*kusala*): 1. *And what is the wholesome? Abstention from the destruction of life is wholesome; abstention from taking what is not given is wholesome; abstention from sexual misconduct is wholesome; abstention from false speech is wholesome; abstention from divisive speech is wholesome; abstention from harsh speech is wholesome; abstention from idle chatter is wholesome... and what is the root of the wholesome? Non-greed is a root of the wholesome; non-hatred is a root of the wholesome; non-delusion is a root of the wholesome.* — from MN9, translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi. 2. Wholesomeness is the binding agent for all spiritual growth. Meditative wisdom cannot be realized without it being rooted in wholesomeness. allan cooper

¹¹ The Noble Eightfold Path 1. (Pali: *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*) is an early summary of the path of Buddhist practices leading to liberation from samsara, the painful cycle of rebirth. The Eightfold Path consists of eight practices: right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. The Noble Eightfold Path is one of

How a Home Retreat Differs from a Formal Retreat

Despite core similarities, a Home Retreat does not look like a formal residential retreat at a retreat center or monastery and should not be considered in that light. It's true, a Home Retreat can be structured to closely resemble a residential retreat, but the intention for a Home Retreat is to learn how to integrate the realities of a lay life with the wisdom gleaned from formal practices. One uses everyday responsibilities, choices and distractions as the field for our practice. *Everyday life is essential to the Home Retreat.* Frequent use of Home Retreats trains the yogi and gives an unconscious permission to integrate and advance the techniques and wisdom gleaned into our Home Practice thus creating a continuous platform to deepen our practice.

When doing a Home Retreat one continues normal activities of daily living, but instead of fitting meditation practice in when it's convenient, the practice becomes the primary focus.

Who Can Benefit from Home Retreat

Home Retreats are exceptionally valuable for two types of lay yogi. First is any yogi who, regardless of his or her retreat experience or level of wisdom, is motivated to make spiritual practice the central focus of his or her life. The second is a yogi who has done a number of longish retreats and finds that his or her lay life practice is under-supported between retreats.

the principal teachings of Theravada Buddhism, taught to lead to *Arhatship*. In the Theravada tradition, this path is also summarized as *sila* (morality), *samadhi* (meditation) and *panna* (insight). Wikipedia. 2. The core teachings of Buddhist philosophy and the 'how to' foundation for all Buddhist meditative practices. allan cooper. 3. Please consult: The Noble Eightfold Path; Way to the End of Suffering, Bhikkhu Bodhi.

Foundational Readings for Home Retreat

To best understand and make use of this Home Retreat Guide I suggest you read in Nyanaponika Thera's *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* with special attention to the section on *sampajañña*. Also very helpful is Bhikkhu Bodhi's very short book *The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to the End of Suffering*.¹² These two texts will serve any yogi throughout the Path and both are especially useful for doing Home Retreats.

This particular guide relies heavily on the Mahasi Sayadaw¹³ school of Theravada Buddhist¹⁴ practice as a foundation, but because spiritual practice is not exclusive to any one tradition, this guide can be of service to anyone who is sincere in cultivating an integrated and effective meditative life. For anyone reading this guide who may be unfamiliar with Mahasi practice or Buddhist meditation practices, please use your own spiritual tradition's language and apply these instructions to your practice where it appears a fit and useful.

Pali, the ancient Buddhist scriptural language, is used regularly in the text and frequently in the footnotes. Using Pali is not a necessary requirement in order to practice or study *vipassanā* (insight)¹⁵ meditation, but it does allow those who practice in this particular way to share a language. Sharing a language specific to meditation can have wide ranging benefits; it can serve by reducing confusion when speaking with others regarding meditation practice while simultaneously creating community. When Pali is used in the text it has been chosen because

¹² See Index.

¹³ Mahasi Sayadaw: Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahasi_Sayadaw.

¹⁴ Theravada: Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theravada>

¹⁵ *Vipassanā*: 1. In English *vipassanā*, mindfulness, *sati*, and insight, are often used interchangeably to describe the meditation practice of bringing one's unfiltered attention to our experience at any of the six sense doors. The Pali term *sati* is also commonly used to mean *vipassanā*. allan cooper 2. *Vipassanā*, which means to see things as they really are, is one of India's most ancient techniques of meditation. It was rediscovered by Gotama Buddha more than 2500 years ago and was taught by him as a universal remedy for universal ills. This non-sectarian technique aims for the total eradication of mental impurities and the resultant highest happiness of full liberation. <https://www.dhamma.org/en/about/vipassana> (unknown) 3. Insight meditation (*vipassanā*): Attending to objects of consciousness with bare attention. 4. 'The Noble Eightfold Path: Way to the End of Suffering', Chapter Six, 'Sammā-Sati', Bhikkhu Bodhi.

there is no adequate English word or phrase to capture that word or that phrase's precise meaning.

It will be especially useful to have a working understanding of these basic terms: *sati*,¹⁶ *sampajañña*,¹⁷ *sati-sampajañña*,¹⁸ *yogi*,¹⁹ *vipassanā*²⁰ and *vinaya*.²¹ Also, throughout the document the terms 'focus' and 'attention' appear frequently. These terms are interchangeable and have a general meaning. They are used to describe our attempts to bring meditative skills to bear in the moment. Sometimes they will mean very intensive laser-like concentration and sometimes they will mean a softer and more general understanding and approach to the situation being explored. The terms will be self-explanatory depending on the context being used.

The footnotes to this guide are intended to be more than a quick eye to the meaning of a word or to the context of a phrase. Mixed in the footnotes is a rich vein of information with links to commentaries and original texts, along with a few personal definitions and comments. These veins and threads offer the reader the opportunity to consult and study the necessary fundamentals of this meditation practice. It definitely provides a retreatant a way to best utilize the Home Retreat Guide.

Tip: Using the indexes and footnotes in this Guide will open doors to

¹⁶ *Sati*: 1. 'Mindfulness' is one of the Five Spiritual Faculties and Powers, one of the Seven Factors of Enlightenment and the Seventh link of the Noble Eightfold Path, and is, in its widest sense, one of those mental factors inseparably associated with all karmically wholesome and karma-produced lofty consciousness. Buddhist Dictionary by Nyanatiloka. 2. *Sati*, *vipassanā* and insight meditation are often used interchangeably in English. For the purpose of this Guide it is helpful to translate *vipassanā* to mean *sati-sampajañña*, and that *sati* and *sampajañña* as having different and distinct meanings. allan cooper

¹⁷ *Sampajañña*: See footnote 13.

¹⁸ *Sati-sampajañña*: See footnote 11.

¹⁹ *Yogi*: See footnote 2.

²⁰ *Vipassanā*: See footnote 17.

²¹ *Vinaya*: (Basket of the Discipline). 1. The *vinaya*, literally meaning "leading out," "education," and "discipline." It is the regulatory framework for the *sangha* or monastic community of Buddhism based on the canonical texts called the *Vinaya Pitaka*. Wikipedia. 2. In other words, the rules and conventions that all Buddhist monastics agree to adhere to when they are ordained. Code of conduct. Livelihood. allan cooper

scriptural study and, for many, is a key to a better understanding of what meditation does and is about.

Practice Emphasis on a Home Retreat

Home Retreat is a committed, prescribed period of time when we intensify our meditative focus beyond our usual home practice by:

- 1) Applying old skills gleaned from residential retreats, such as:
 - Applying techniques learned on retreat in order to support continuity of *sati-sampajañña*.
 - Deepening intention by reflecting on previously attained wholesome states of mind that were realized on formal retreat.
 - Remembering to restrain the senses (*indriya-samvara*)²² thus catalyzing continuity of effort by embracing renunciation (*nekkhamma*).²³

2) Bringing in new techniques to be explored and developed, for example:

- Using *vipassanā* when it is appropriate during our daily lives. Exploring the full spectrum of what *vipassanā* is.
- Using *sampajañña* when *vipassanā* is not appropriate.
- Using both during formal practice sessions.

3) Altering our daily routines *and our focus* in order to bring much greater continuous attention to our daily activities, including:

- Following our schedule with integrity coupled with flexible kindness.

²² Restraint of the Senses (*indriya-samvara*): 1. Restraint of the senses is a multi-tiered meditative practice that encompasses a conscious effort to restrain our speech and actions in the outer world and to bring *sati* to any sense object at the moment of its arising in consciousness. By not indulging in the habit of taking that which is pleasant in a mental process that leads to clinging or that which is unpleasant in a mental process that leads to aversion, we train the mind to stay with what is. allan cooper 2. Sense restraint is a practice within Clear Comprehension. Circumstances define what skills we apply. Applied sense restraint is a 'Gradual Path' which is supported by continuous determination imbued with a caring patience. allan cooper 3. AN 4:198. 4. AN 4:37 5. DN 2:64, 6. MN 38.

²³ Renunciation (*nekkhamma*): 1. In the Noble Eightfold Path, *nekkhamma* is the first practice associated with "Right Intention." In the Theravada list of ten perfections, *nekkhamma* is the third practice of "perfection (*pārami*)." It involves non-attachment (detachment) and limiting choices. Wikipedia. 2. Renunciation is an everyday practice that can simplify a person's life by eliminating habitual reliance on habit and preference. allan cooper 3. MN 137:10-15.

- Making Right Speech (*sammā-sankappa*),²⁴ Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*),²⁵ and Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*)²⁶ a constant field of attention and experimentation.
- Adding micro-moments of mindfulness throughout the day.

Cultivation of *sampajañña*

During Home Retreats, we take a specific period of time (days or weeks) when we bring an out-of-the-ordinary attention into our everyday activities coupled with an increase of formal meditation practice. By increasing the frequency and the total amount of time we practice *vipassanā* and/or *samatha* (concentration meditation),²⁷ we anchor the retreat. What ties the practice together is the cultivation of *sampajañña* in our everyday activities. On Home Retreat *sampajañña* becomes the yogi's primary meditation tool when not doing formal meditation.

Tip: There are a number of Pali terms used in this text, *sampajañña* being one of the most commonly used. This particular Pali term is pointed out and used because it is generally not understood and frequently often overlooked during formal retreat practice. In the footnotes there are very good definitions and references where you can study and become more familiar with how important this practice is. This is especially important for householders and the successful Home Retreat. In a nutshell, should you not choose to look it up and become familiar with what the term means in our everyday lives, *sampajañña* is a mental process where the yogi considers every speech and action through the filters of virtue and the Three Characteristics (*ti-lakkhana*).²⁸ Without this conscious

²⁴ Right Speech (*sammā-sankappa*): 1. 'The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to End Suffering'. Chapter Four. Bhikkhu Bodhi. 2. MN 117: 3. MN 61:4. DN 2: 5. SN 45:8, 6. AN 5:198, 7. AN 10:176, etc.

²⁵ Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*): 'The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to End Suffering'. Chapter Three. etc.

²⁶ Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*): 'The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to End Suffering'. Chapter Three. etc.

²⁷ *Samatha*: 1. Concentration meditation: Attending to a single object of meditation without interruption. 2. 'The Noble Eightfold Path: Way to the End of Suffering', Chapter Seven, '*Sammā-Samādhi*', Bhikkhu Bodhi.

²⁸ Three Characteristics: (*ti-lakkhana*) 1. The 'Three Characteristics of existence, or *signata*, are Impermanence (*anicca*), suffering/dissatisfaction or misery (*dukkha*) and Not-Self (*anattā*). Buddhist Dictionary by Nyanatiloka. 2. In Buddhism, the three marks of existence are three characteristics of all existence and beings, namely impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness

intention our practices become dry and silently separate us from the intentions that move us to practice.

During Home Retreat we use the fodder of habit patterns; when the mind needs to make a choice, we apply *sampajañña* or *sati* whenever possible. Each person will have differing spheres of blind habit and unique intense preferences. Habits and preferences are often strong and easily seen in relationship with food, sleep needs, sexual thinking/actions, and when and *why* we partake in entertainment. Applied *sampajañña* during our daily activities coupled with increased formal meditation infuses yogis with the opportunity to explore, test and then develop a routine that will de-condition our latent tendencies away from habit and instead move us towards a focused and an awakened mind. The skill of applying *sampajañña* to many activities throughout our day sets a default habit to pause before engaging in speech or action thus creating a field for continuous attention.

The more a yogi practices *sampajañña* by applying sense restraint combined with increased formal sitting periods - not only in time and frequency but also making it a priority throughout the day - the less frequently the mind will turn towards thinking and planning and mindless wandering while sitting or during activities of daily living.

The yogi continues with the necessities of life, e.g., jobs, childcare, shopping, cooking, cleaning, gardening, exercising, going to appointments, and even participating in appropriate socializing, while bringing the reflective qualities of *sampajañña* and sense restraint into as many activities as possible. This includes the *spaces between*

or suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). These three characteristics are mentioned in verses 277, 278 and 279 of the *Dhammapada*. That humans are subject to delusion about the three marks, that this delusion results in suffering/dissatisfaction, and that removal of that delusion results in the end of suffering/dissatisfaction, are central themes in the Buddhist Four Noble Truths and Noble Eightfold Path. Wikipedia.

activities. How often between activities does the mind flow to planning/wandering, for instance, and neglect the walking, touching, hearing, seeing, etc. that is occurring during those in-between moments? The Home Retreat is an opportunity to find out how and when the mind tends in this direction and to do something about de-conditioning one's habits towards a field of continuous wholesomeness.

Householder's *Vinaya*

Both monastics and lay meditators share very similar schedules while on formal retreat despite having very different types of everyday lives when not on retreat. While on formal retreat, both are practicing in the same rarefied and prescribed environment which funnels all aspects of our experience towards the cultivation of the Noble Eightfold Path. A formal residential retreat environment is 'designed' in every way to minimize the clutter of distraction in our daily routines to make room for the cultivation and development of the continuous practice of virtue (*silā*),²⁹ concentration, and wisdom (*pañña*).³⁰ In other words, this environment is the most intensive and most structured environment to train the mind/heart towards the cultivation of our full potential for Wisdom. How so? The formal retreat environment routine is unencumbered by most of the niggling everyday conflicts and baggage that challenge our everyday virtue and continuity of *vipassanā*. On retreat we restrain ourselves in speech by maintaining noble silence. We also choose to limit all unnecessary reading and writing, and almost all of our physical needs are provided thus protecting the yogi from activities that intrude on our concentration and/or challenge our abilities to maintain continuous *sati-sampajañña*. Formal retreats also reduce the almost

²⁹ Virtue, Morality (*silā*): Is a mode of mind and volition manifested in speech or bodily actions. Karma. It is the foundation of the whole Buddhist practice, and therewith the first of the Three kinds of Training that forms the 3-fold division of the 8-fold path, i.e., morality, concentration, and wisdom. Buddhist Dictionary, Nyanatiloka.

³⁰ Wisdom (*pañña*): 'Understanding, Knowledge, Wisdom, Insight,' comprise a very wide field. The specific Buddhist Knowledge or wisdom, however, as part of the Noble Eightfold Path to deliverance is Insight, i.e., that intuitive knowledge which brings about the four stages of Holiness and the realization of Nibbāna, and which consists of the penetration of the Impermanency, Misery, and Impersonality of all forms of existence. Buddhist Dictionary, Nyanatiloka.

constant everyday necessity for making big and small choices. A retreat environment tells us when to eat, rest and practice. The structure funnels even the smallest of choices into very narrow parameters which helps to allow the yogi to notice them clearly and to then bring meditative attention into the moment. When to bathe, or do the laundry, or clean one's room are all prescribed by the daily schedule. There is very little room for our preferences to become the default behavior model.

The continuous practice, the silence and the purity of mind that come from many days, weeks or months of formal residential retreat practice, where most distractions and choices are kept from us, allows the mind to become unfettered by small and great remorse, guilt and/or shame. These freedoms simultaneously feed a momentum towards greater purity and more precise meditative attention. The triad of retreat practice, environment and virtue permits yogis a greater opportunity to investigate and train the mind towards wholesomeness.

As a consequence, for those lay meditating yogis who understand how important virtue is to the progress of our meditation, the choice will often be made to take vows of either the Five or the Eight Precepts (*pañca-sīla* or *attha-sīla*)³¹ as active tools of trainings in their everyday practices. The lay yogi who takes the Five or Eight Precepts is building a Householder's *vinaya*.

To best understand the core structure of this Precept style of practice, we need to cultivate an attitude that is both specific and general, both disciplined and friendly. For a successful Home Retreat/Home Practice, we need more than simply setting our resolve and then looking at our calendars and muddling ahead. The development of a Householder's *vinaya* must always take its root from applied virtue, as taught in the

³¹ Five or Eight Precepts (*pañca-sīla* or *attha-sīla*): 1. See indexes. 2. AN 8:39

Noble Eightfold Path: Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood which encompasses the Precepts. When a yogi commits to fulfilling the wholesome intentions of the virtue factors of the Noble Eightfold Path, the exercise in and of itself turns a yogi's mind/heart towards finding ways to cultivate with skillful means applied *sati-sampajañña*.

Despite doing more formal practice than usual, a Home Retreat is still based in everyday life. The ambiguities and variables of everyday life create the perfect testing ground in real time to explore and test our understanding, compassion for self and others and to learn new patterns that assist us in the development of the skills necessary for navigating a life based in virtue, concentration and wisdom.

It is understood from a meditation perspective that virtue trains intentions. It is not a situation in which, if rules are broken, you fail, or have sinned or are a bad person. Virtue is a training. Training is a process. It takes time and careful attention to perfect any training. It is also helpful to understand that the total uprooting of unwholesome actions and unwholesome mind activity won't happen until deep Wisdom has taken root which might take a lifetime of practice to realize. So, give yourself some latitude, exercise patience and learn to enjoy the challenge while never losing sight that the perfection of virtue is both the cause and the fruit of all spiritual Wisdom.

Understanding that we are in training allows a yogi the room to accept the Precepts as tools and not just rules. Acknowledging that the Precepts are not rules, while at the same time holding moral absolute authority may provide inspiration to strive to perfect this aspect of life by trying again and again when we fail to meet our highest understanding. The Precepts are forgiving yet remain firm in the understanding of what is universal wholesomeness. A yogi can use them like a child learning to

ride a bicycle. One often falls and takes the falling as a method to learn and then gets up and tries again. There is no rule about falling except if you want to learn to ride you get back on the bicycle and try again.

This same principle of try, try again applies to Home Retreat and the notion of a Householder's *vinaya*. When we set our intentions for the retreat, when we make our schedule, when we live our lives during retreat, we are training ourselves with a forgiving heart in the knowledge that there is no one size fits all for what we are doing. We are not perfect in our Wisdom. There is only the intention and our actions that are steering us towards greater continuity of wholesomeness. Part of this intention is not only the practical necessity to create a *vinaya* for ourselves but, also, how to hold it, exercise it, and try to perfect it. Like the Precepts, our householder's *vinaya* are training goals supported by an attitude of kindness and forgiveness, which is just as important as the unflinching commitment towards a determined wholesome outcome.

In every way possible, the yogi on Home Retreat gives special emphasis to all forms of communication and to any situation that presents choices or the opportunity for proliferation of mind (*papañca*)³² to arise. Communications in this case include speaking, reading, writing, and visual and volitional auditory impressions (TV, computer, email, smartphone use, news, radio, music, wandering glances, etc.). The yogi should not watch just her/his participation in these activities, but even how, when, and why she/he *chooses* or by habit finds the mind engaged in them.

When we combine Right Intention (*sammā-sankappa*),³³ Right

³² *Papañca*: Complication; proliferation, objectification: The tendency of the mind to proliferate issues from the sense of "self." This term can also be translated as self-reflexive thinking, reification, falsification, distortion, elaboration, or exaggeration. In the discourses it is frequently used in analyses of the psychology of conflict. Buddhist Dictionary, Nyanatiloka.

³³ Right Intention (*sammā-sankappa*): 'The Noble Eightfold Path'. Bhikkhu Bodhi. Chapter Three.

Investigation, and Right Effort, we create a wholesome mental environment that doesn't just allow us to experiment in new ways but actually obliges the mind to move towards wholesomeness. When a wholesome mental environment exists, there is more opportunity to pause and reflect using *sampajañña* before any speech or any action starts. This pattern of mind conditions continuity of intention towards a deeper wholesomeness. With strong wholesome intention the mind/heart naturally begins to move towards skillful action which further supports a heart/mind unfettered by unwholesomeness. A continuous loop is created.

Combining these practices and applying them with a self-friendly diligence, we begin to break down the unwholesome habits of the mind which frequently arise if not noticed during our normal activities. A Home Retreat becomes a laboratory to test new ways to cultivate and strengthen our wholesome intentions through our everyday speech and actions. When our speech and actions begin to spontaneously reflect virtue, compassion and harmlessness we can rest assured that the link between intention and action is becoming increasingly linked to Wisdom.

Additional Logistics of the Home Retreat

The first things to determine are when best to do your retreat, how long you can commit and whether or not you can find others to do a parallel retreat with you. Much can be accomplished in a week or a ten day Home Retreat. However, shorter periods of time, even just one day, can also be extremely valuable.

Not everybody has the luxury of living alone and having the free time to easily go on a formal residential retreat or to plan and do a Home Retreat. Most of us have domestic partners, children, roommates, and/or

aging parents living with us, not to mention pets, guests, and any number of obligatory social responsibilities that create functional difficulties in planning and following through with a Home Retreat. And, there are also those of us who work and can't take time off which adds another layer of complications and planning. Yet, it is precisely these life factors that if addressed with skill and follow through will provide the opportunities for Wisdom and wholesome habit to become second nature.

In fact, in many ways this Guide is written for you.

Munindraji,³⁴ while staying with a senior and very committed yogi who fit the above description, wisely taught her how to make her domestic life a segment of her practice. He taught her that while caring for her three children as a single parent, she could use the time while washing the dishes, or walking to the laundry room, etc. as periods of active walking or dishwashing meditation. Meditation in motion. Meditation as life presents itself. Sure, you might say, that type of practice is doable at home, but what about trying to do it at one's work and what about the feelings of others when all of a sudden I start acting a bit strange and doing things differently? I suggest you talk to your loved ones before the retreat and get them on board as far as they can.

On board doesn't mean that they will do the retreat with you; it means that they know what you are doing and why. Let them know how valuable just their understanding is to the success of your retreat. You might tell them how important the retreat is for you, and explain in detail what you think will remain the same and how your behaviour will

³⁴ Munindraji: 1. Was an Indian lay teacher most often associated in the West as being Joseph Goldstein's and Dipama's teacher. His impact on how Theravada Buddhism is understood in the West cannot be overstated. In the book *Living This Life Fully: Stories and Teachings of Munindra*, 2010, by Mirka Knaster the reader is given a most extraordinary example of how to live a Home Retreat as a layperson. allan cooper

change. No surprises. Then watch your reactions in each interaction should someone do or not do what they said they would. It doesn't matter. They are with you as far as they can be, and the rest is your responsibility to make your inner experience a field for *sati-sampajañña*. Allowing the opportunity to support you could soften any resistance they might have to you taking care of yourself. Being in conversation with those you will affect might even help them learn how all of us have choices on how we live. Your family might step up and offer to help you in your retreat. They might not. In either case fill the role that your family and the situation offers with as much ease and grace as you can with as much inner *sati-sampajañña* as you can muster.

It is more difficult to maintain *sati* during meals if you live and eat with others. This is especially true if we are the caregivers. Meals will be more involved with less control due to the social situation. Should this be the case, it will be helpful to your practice to have some guidelines that can be discussed with your housemates/family before your retreat begins. Without planning and setting your expectations towards what can/can't be done with others, meals will more likely undermine your continuity.

Planning your meals before starting your retreat will help support sense restraint by limiting this arena of choice each and every time you need to eat. Shop for your food before the retreat begins. Cook and freeze ahead of time. Try to eat at the same time each day. Reflect on and/or chant your gratitude for the food you are about to eat. In all respects, limit choice. *Keep it simple*. Just cook what is scheduled, eat with careful *sati*, and clean up with as much continuous *sati-sampajañña* as possible. You might choose to take the Sixth Precept.³⁵ Try not to admonish or criticize

³⁵ *Vikāla-bhojanā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādhīyāmi*, I undertake the Precept to refrain from eating at the forbidden time (i.e., afternoon till the sun rises the next day). I will eat with an attention towards sustenance with applied mindfulness and clear comprehension during all drinking and eating.

yourself or others if agreements aren't holding. Adapt and move on. Keep it simple and try to stay focused.

Work is challenging in a different way and could be more difficult than at home. Unless you work in a very special place and with very special people the fact that you are doing a Home Retreat will not mean anything to your boss or your work team. Telling them might, in fact, make you appear strange and suspect and could affect their ability to see you skillfully in the future. It will be best to do your work as you normally would. And, as often as possible, commit to five minutes of practice every hour. How? You could make your commute or the walking to your work station an opportunity of starting and ending your work day mindfully. During the day leave your work situation and go to the bathroom mindfully, take a flight of stairs or a walk to the tool shed as an opportunity of walking meditation during a break. Turn your chair away from your desk or put your tool down and sit or stand quietly. To take a break walk mindfully to the refrigerator or water cooler, make your lunch an exercise in eating meditation. In other words, there are many ways a person on Home Retreat can subtly and silently make room for practice during the work day. What is important to try and create is a field where you visit your practice and your commitment to the Home Retreat as often as possible while sustaining an integrity to your work. Remember that while at work, we are fitting in our Home Retreat with work.

Once you've decided the length and dates of your Home Retreat, the next step is to begin the process of creating your daily schedule³⁶. First, decide how many hours of sitting, walking and formal study you will do each day. Next, set a formal sitting/walking/study schedule for yourself: when you'll sit, when you'll walk, when you'll study. Then plan when

³⁶ See template in index.

you'll do your activities of daily living such as your work-related activities of commuting, electronic and face-to-face communications, work projects. Also, consider and plan for family and community commitments and responsibilities such as meals, chores, errands, exercise, sleep, etc. If you'll give yourself entertainment, decide when, what kind and for how long. However, make the retreat your priority! And, within the retreat, make sitting your priority! *Even a person with a busy schedule can do a Home Retreat; it's a matter of whether or not you can make the retreat the filter for your life or not.*

First, prioritize a daily schedule that emphasizes continuous *sati-sampajañña*³⁷ in all activities by introducing a heightened focus towards the simplicity of sense restraint, second schedule as much formal meditation as one's daily responsibilities permit and third, bring a re-focused intensity to your meditative goals by practicing wise reflection through applied *sampajañña* (clear comprehension).³⁸

After establishing a schedule in your mind, *write it down*, post it or have it where you will see it. Read it frequently and share it with a spiritual friend (*kalyānamitta*).³⁹ Combining these activities, the mental factor of intention is strengthened and you make yourself accountable to a greater willingness to follow through. This is critical because intention, which is part of Right View (*sammā-ditthi*)⁴⁰ and Right Effort, is necessary for the success of a Home Retreat. After reviewing the schedule, make an internal commitment to it and share it with your retreat friend or

³⁷ *Sati-sampajañña*: 1. *Sati* and *sampajañña* are two terms combined to mean one thing. *Sati* is the function of the mind that can bring meditative focus on any conscious object and get to know it without self-referencing or preference. *Samapajañña* is the wholesome attempt to understand what an object is. Without *sampajañña sati* is simply a function of the mind without understanding. *Sampajañña* without *sati* is speculation. Combined these mental functions can de-condition and reorient the mind towards freedom from unwholesome patterns of mind, speech and action. allan cooper 2. *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*: MN:10.

³⁸ *Sampajañña*: Clear Comprehension: 1. Attending to four categories of attention: Purpose, Suitability, Domain, and Reality. allan cooper. 2. 'The Heart of Buddhist Meditation', Nyanaponika Thera. 3. *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. MN:10.

³⁹ Spiritual friend (*kalyānamitta*): 1. SN 45:2 *Upaddha Sutta*. 2. Access to Insight, 'Admirable Friendship: *Kalyanamitta*'. 3. In common usage 'a spiritual friend.' In a traditional sense it means a teacher or a knower of the way. allan cooper

⁴⁰ Right View (*sammā-ditthi*): 1. 'The Noble Eightfold Path: Way to the End of Suffering,' Chapter Two. Bhikkhu Bodhi.

someone who you respect in practice. Tell him or her your schedule and send it to him or her in an email. Include how many days you intend to be on Home Retreat, how many sittings a day you intend to do, how long you intend to sit, and any particular formal study focus you might want to pursue. Solicit this friend's advice. Consider all new ideas and previously not-considered points of view and see if what is being offered might serve you. All too often in practice we fall prey to thinking we know best and forget we frequently confuse ourselves by thinking what is best is really only that which is easy or pleasant. Allowing new notions and new perspectives to be tested can open not only our eyes but can also open the horizon to new skills and new perspectives.

Once you have a list of what you do in a day and what you must do for the time you are on retreat make sure you keep those appointments and chores on your list that are necessary and jettison any activities that can be postponed such as that art or writing project you're working on, or the morning coffee with friends at the coffee house, reading/watching the news, or going online for email or Facebook more than scheduled. These are activities that are normal and acceptable in everyday life but will be distractions and added burdens to you maintaining continuity of restraint and attention. Take notice if there are days, for instance on the weekend, where you can adjust your schedule for more sitting. Always keep an eye to how you might refine your understanding of *sampajañña* when examining all those appointments, tasks and activities of daily life. Remember, this is a retreat and, as with all retreats, you will be assisted by restraint and continuity.

In order to create a balanced approach, your situation and your skills must be carefully assessed. It's helpful to stay aware of which activities create choice and encourage preferences, and which will provide support for a successful investigation of your Home Retreat. Do activities that

are important in your life. If exercise is important to balance your energy or to sustain good health, get your exercise. Don't exclude all pleasant, nurturing daily activities. Try to create a schedule that is doable and balanced and kindly towards both your goal and towards this unique type of practice. The goal is to limit distractions and situations that create choice or situations that cultivate the opiated buzz of distraction as much as possible.

For those types of activities where choice is part of the situation, bring heightened attention to the choices and watch your preferences while they are in the process of arising. To clarify, preferences will arise in almost all activities. They will arise in the most mundane of activities such as using the left leg to start walking instead of the right, all the way to picking your favorite ice cream. They will also arise in more important situations such as deciding whether to purchase a new car or stay with the current one, change jobs, get married or stay married, plans/hopes for the kids, if it's time to move into a retirement home, and on and on. Whatever the situation, with as little judgement as possible bring heightened investigative examination to the choices and preferences as they are in the process of arising. Just notice with as little identification as possible. Notice the difference between being in the story and observing the story as merely a thought. Try to avoid making big life decisions while on any kind of retreat. The mind is not geared to these levels of consideration. Wait until after the retreat.

This particular part of the practice starts by our becoming aware of our preferences as they present themselves. The sooner we become aware of our preferences and the more familiar we are with how our minds behave in the face of our likes and dislikes, the sooner we will become skilled in being able to pause before speaking or acting which offers us a greater potential of allowing wisdom to become the greater part of our

process.

The more we investigate preferences, the more we will see how they arise and how they affect our lives. Hint: As soon as you notice a pattern occurring, whether in thought, speech or action, immediately bring your investigative focus to whether or not there is a feeling tone (pleasant, unpleasant or neutral) concomitant with the pattern in either or both the body and the mind. Ask yourself, 'Does this pattern comfort me? How? Why?' Then ask yourself, 'Does this object/experience create further sequences of pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral feelings in the body or the mind?' The less we allow preferences to move from pleasantness to liking, to wanting/not wanting, the greater the potential for Wisdom to arise.

Take another careful look at your list of activities of daily living and the schedule you made, especially look at those activities that define you as a human being. As an example, all humans must eat. We must sleep. We must attend to our bodies with cleaning, toileting, addressing sexual impulses, maintaining health/strength. And we must attend to our surroundings in regards to safety and interaction with other humans and other species, to name just a few examples. These are the types of hard-wired necessities that our entire lives are built upon. A householder's activities are a construction of these basic human needs. Genetically we are hardwired to do certain things. How these activities manifest will be different depending on the society, history, context and the character of the individual.

The roots of these types of activities are the most difficult to watch or understand with our rational minds. It takes special meditative effort to break through the veils of these basic habits. It is helpful and important to pay attention while on retreat because they will affect your choices and behaviors. Pay particular attention to hunger, tiredness, pleasantness

and/or anxiety/fear. What do they feel like in the body and the mind? How do they affect our thoughts, speech and behaviors? Are they mixed with pleasantness or unpleasantness? The more intimate and familiar we are to such basic human experiences, the stronger the probability of not succumbing to them and reacting out of habit rooted in desire/aversion/ignorance. Hunger or sleepiness might arise but instead of grabbing an apple, having a cup of tea or taking a nap, we continue with our commitment to the schedule.

Create Strong Intention

Your Home Retreat schedule is your choice. Whichever way you choose to make your schedule your ability to maintain it will affect whether or not you strengthen patterns of continuous attention or not. You may choose to sit one hour a day for the first few days and increase the time gradually, or if your schedule and energy can handle it, you could start with ten hours of sitting a day right off the bat. Each of us is different and each time we do a Home Retreat we will discover different conditions which will allow for new perspectives, new situations and new skills to be explored and developed. Each retreat shares and builds on prior retreats to improve the quality and follow-through of your intention and commitment. It doesn't matter if you've scheduled a light or very heavy schedule; it's whether or not you've honored your intention and commitment with skillful means that will provide you with the most reward.

Report to Others

Reporting to others what you intend to do and, if possible, scheduling parallel retreats with other yogis will support the retreat. To share a period of time and be partnered up while in your own home will increase the focus, commitment and energy of the practice. Knowing that others are making a similar commitment supports the practice, increases the

energy and makes accountability to self and others an important part of the learning curve. Scheduling video or phone connections with other retreatants will further support your retreat. The more successful you are in sustaining the intention to maintain the retreat schedule, the more probable access to deeper Wisdom will become.

III. Guidance While on Retreat

Focus on Continuity and Follow-through

Continuity and follow-through must be cultivated and sustained for any activity to be skillfully accomplished. This is true whether it be everyday goals, during retreat practice or when doing home practice. On Home Retreat, I do *everything* I can to support the continuity of my intention towards attention during my day and for the duration of the retreat. I constantly check in with myself to see what my energy and intention might be doing and then I do what I can to balance myself mentally and physically. This translates into applying as many tools as I can as often as I can throughout the day. I try to slow down, watch the beginning/middle/ends of movements or thoughts when appropriate and silently ask myself over and over again, ‘Is this speech useful/kind/timely and if so how?’ By chipping away at my automatic behaviors, I am supporting my retreat’s purpose. I am also scrupulously careful to watch if the practice is beginning to take a back seat to my preferred routines and habits. If you are like me, this checking-in becomes critical if one wants to maintain the kind of wholesome intention and continuity that inspired us to choose to do a Home Retreat in the first place.

Micro-Moments Make a Whole

All too often during our everyday lives, the momentum of doing and getting things done creates an illusion of constancy, a forest rather than

many individual trees. Home Retreat in its various ways supports us to look at the trees in order to better appreciate and understand the forest. Another tool that supports our study of the forest is to notice micro moments of direct and clear *sati* when they arise. For many of us these moments happen spontaneously and not infrequently. Every day there will be moments when we experience a sight, sound, smell, taste, sensation or even a thought in a very rendered and basic way. We see, or taste, or feel or simply notice a thought for being a thought and nothing more or we sense a touch or see only color or form with little or no attachment in the moment. Just the experience. Fortunately and unfortunately these moments are brief which allows us to move on with our task and day. Yet to ignore these moments and not support them with a few added moments of reflection can cause them to lose some of their power and value.

I suggest two exercises to help notice these moments. First, when a micro-moment of pure *sati* arises bring your focus to it, see what happens with this added focus on it, see if you can notice the quality of the *sati* and then notice what happens next. Is it ‘watching/observing,’ and/or does it quickly become ‘I am watching/observing?’ If it is the latter, notice the posture of ‘I’m watching’ and try not to evaluate or judge and just carry on yet try to remember what just ‘watching’ was like.

The second exercise is to cultivate these types of micro-moments of *sati* on a fairly regular basis throughout our day. The more frequently we support the arising and noticing of micro-moments of *sati*, the more we strengthen a variety of mental factors. This in turn enables us to access *sati* more readily and in ever more basic ways, both spontaneously and when doing formal practice.

Here are two quick tips: First, take some activity that you do mindlessly over and over again throughout the day and give a moment's quick *sati* or reflective *sampajañña* to that activity. For instance, reaching, then touching, then holding your keys. Are they cold, sharp, heavy, light? Also, notice the intention to pick up the keys and ask yourself, 'Am I going someplace for wholesome reasons? Is this trip necessary?' Reaching, then touching, then using pressure to open, pass through and close the door. You may also focus on the urge to urinate/defecate, the intention to do so, the process of getting you to the bathroom, the process of evacuating or urinating. Notice also what the mind is doing, paying attention to cleaning and going on to the next activity. The second tip, and maybe most challenging as well as likely most rewarding to your investigation, is waking up to the automatic behaviors that surround your use of screen time. This is especially true regarding the smartphone. How about bringing attention to every urge to touch your phone, the reaching, the activity, the value of the activity, the putting it away, or simply noticing the urge and observing the urge until it changes.

The more often we string moments of *sati-sampajañña* together or simply add these types of moments to our day, the more we are effectively de-conditioning our patterns as well as the blindness to our patterns. I often look at this type of practice like a string of pearls. Our lives are the string and the pearls are moments of wisdom. The more moments of wisdom, the more valuable and beautiful the necklace becomes.

Lead with Strength

If you can, start your retreat on a day when you can give more hours to formal practice than you expect to be able to do for the rest of the retreat. Make that day special with whatever it takes to create a focused

heartfelt intention. This might include chanting, making an offering of dana to a teacher or an organization, or reading a favorite inspirational quote. Something. Whatever moves you.

After several days, many yogis experience a slump when effort lags and doubt ascends. This is the time for a day of determination or maybe just a couple of focused sits to revitalize your momentum and commitment. Each person will have his or her own ways of creating special intention. The key is to experiment and find your own signature and do it.

Cultivate Wise Flexibility

It is best to hold your final schedule with a light hand. For example, I have found from experience that it is best for me to sit five or six sittings a day (45-75 minutes each). I try to do a couple of sits early in the morning, another sit mid-morning, another mid-afternoon, and a couple near the end of the day. However, there has never been a day that my intended schedule fit perfectly with my projected notion of what the day or the retreat would look like. While it's important to have a schedule in mind, it doesn't have to be adhered to in a rigid way. As a matter of fact, it is right here, at the place where our expectations and our druthers meet the unexpected that a light and flexible attitude becomes the all important mental skill being examined and developed. (How to adjust to the common interruptions of a Home Retreat will be covered later.)

Sometimes you may discover that doing two hours of formal practice is all you can manage due to conditions, but you are still making Home Retreat your priority for the time you've allotted. Other times, you may find you have the time and conditions to do a more formal style retreat at home and can sit five-to-ten hours a day with only infrequent interruptions. The form is not as important as your intention to make *vipassanā* and/or *samatha* and *sampajañña* your focus for this specific

period of time. A light formal sitting retreat means more attention to *sampajañña*, a heavier retreat means more emphasis on *vipassanā*. This training is to be applied in *all* activities, not just the sittings and not just during your activities of daily living. By maintaining your focus and commitment you strengthen intention.

Pay Attention to Social Contact

Minimize unnecessary social contact when doing your chores and errands, and instead focus on getting tasks done. As an example, if I need to go to the grocery store and the hardware store, I try to do both in one trip and make sure I pay attention to any social contact I have by trying to cultivate a silent loving attitude towards the person in front of me. Another example is if I intend to clean the house by mopping the floor, I also dust and vacuum. I try to finish tasks. Less unfinished business allows for fewer opportunities of choice, planning, distraction and laziness to arise. Another example on how to support one's momentum is when I go to the gym, which in my case is frequent, I make sure that my interactions with friends at the gym have a point, have kindness at their root, and that they serve a purpose. I try to limit chatter. These tips will help you to focus your attention towards the many ways your unique experience can or will not be supported by your choice of actions while on Home Retreat.

Bring Friendly Determination to Practice

Whether you choose to sit one, two, four or eight sessions of formal practice a day, and whether they are 15, 60 or 120 minute sessions, remember that it's the quality of kindly determination (*adhitthāna*)⁴¹ and your follow-through that will infect your retreat with a continuity of intention. The same applies to whether or not you can apply skillful

⁴¹ Determination (*adhitthāna*): 1. 'Foundation': Four 'Foundations' of an Arahāt's mentality. 2. 'Determination', resolution. 3. 'Perfection of Resolution' (paramis). Buddhist Dictionary. Nyanatiloka.

restraint and renunciation to your schedule. Restraint is for the purpose of exploring, of strengthening determination, and as a vehicle to discover what generosity and compassion are. In as much as possible it will help to remove ‘shoulds’ from your intentions and supplant your intention with kindness and investigation.

Your Home Retreat may look more like a formal residential retreat or it may be much more engaged with work and family activities which necessitates less formal practice. The form doesn’t matter as much as the quality of your intention, focus and follow-through. And just like on a formal residential retreat, balanced effort is needed to avoid over-efforting or laziness. The same applies to Home Retreat. To best serve our need for balance of our spiritual faculties (*indriya*)⁴² and the needs of our bodies, we have to prioritize our intention towards general and specific types of attention and to make sure it is coupled with friendly determination. Without a determined effort towards continuous attention imbued and saturated with a friendliness for self and others we will burn out. Continuous attention is supported on Home Retreat by emphasizing *sampajañña in all activities* of daily living coupled with increased formal *vipassanā* practice, again, with a firm determination and a friendly gentleness.

If you begin to see that you are trying to squeeze in your formal sitting or the careful attention towards *sampajañña* during the day and you notice that your attention during your activities of daily living are becoming sporadic, your Home Retreat is weakening. Allowing yourself to zombie walk through the retreat is a training towards unskillful habits.

⁴² Spiritual Faculties: (*indriya*) and Five spiritual faculties (*indriya-samatta*): 1. ‘Equilibrium, Balance, or Harmony of the Faculties,’ relates to the five spiritual faculties: Faith, Energy, Mindfulness, Concentration, and Wisdom. 2. The spiritual faculties are more important to the practice of *vipassanā* than this definition seems to imply. Balance of the mind/heart opens oneself to enlightenment. The practice of meditation is a constant process of refining of our intuitive abilities through the understanding of the Three Characteristics and only when the spiritual faculties are balanced can this occur. allan cooper 3. SN 48.10. *Indriya-vibhanga Sutta*: Analysis of the Mental Faculties. 4. Buddhist Dictionary; *indriya-samatta*. p. 67.

Letting things slide is a slippery slope towards reinforcing blindness to your own intentions. Watch your intentions and their quality.

Remember: It is your retreat, and a valuable component of Home Retreat is discovering what works best for you within your own unique circumstances. This will not occur if you are not doing your absolute best.

View Change and the Unexpected as Practice Opportunities

We all experience unexpected events on a daily basis, these will happen during Home Retreat. Different techniques will serve different retreatants in different ways. It is important to not use unexpected circumstances to dilute the quality of the retreat with excuses or laziness. Whatever the circumstances, be prepared for surprises to arise. On Home Retreat these demand flexibility in schedule and attitude. When they do arise and you must amend your daily schedule, that's fine. Make the needed changes with conscious intention and amend the remainder of the day to refocus towards the practice. Make flexibility and continuity your priority. Integrate everything into the practice; it's the point of the retreat.

For example, when my day is interrupted by unforeseen circumstances (car trouble, a surprise doctor or dentist appointment, an unscheduled business-related email, etc.) which forces changes to my schedule, I typically respond by replacing my usual hour-long sits with a number of one-to-ten minute sessions throughout the day whenever the opportunity allows. This permits me to continue the momentum of my practice and even deepens my intention while still attending to the situation at hand. In this manner, the retreat does not have to be put on hold until the unforeseen event is taken care of. You may find other techniques or schedule changing strategies that work better for you. The important thing is to stay aware, experiment and stay committed.

Remember: Flexibility equals kindness. This is a major part of the training. Without flexibility and a special attention towards kindness for self and others, the practice becomes a chore. Remind yourself that you are doing this for the benefit of yourself and for all beings everywhere. The changes that arise on Home Retreat are, in fact, the very heart of this type of practice. Our everyday lives are by their nature in constant flux; the added unpredictability of big surprises are just another more intense level for us to notice something new. Switching gears while keeping an eye open to noticing how the mind switches gears allows for flow throughout the retreat. Switching gears over and over teaches us more subtle tools that assist in the development of investigation and effort. As the gears shift, ask yourself: Is there resistance? Does planning arise immediately? Is the mind able to simply be present and respond? Recognize that all events, all mind objects, in fact everything, is part of your Home Retreat. Be part of the flow of whatever is arising whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. The posture of settling back with attention will help to cultivate patience and equanimity.

Another good technique to practice and develop when sudden changes arise is to cultivate the *parami*⁴³ of patience. Always check to see if the quality of friendliness is present in the mind/heart; if not, it isn't patience. The first step towards patience is to notice whether or not a mental tone of friendliness, acceptance and/or kindness is present when unpleasantness arises. Check and see. If they are not, simply notice, pause and see if you can allow them to enter. Forgiveness and compassionate humor are useful tools in this process. In the face of the unexpected when real patience is present, flexibility of mind/heart will

⁴³ *Pāramis*: (perfections): Ten qualities leading to Buddha-hood: (1) Perfection in Giving (or Liberality; *dāna-pārami*), (2) in Morality (*sīla*), (3) Renunciation (*nekkhamma*), (4) Wisdom (*pañña*), (5) Energy (*virīya*), (6) Patience (or Forbearance; *khanti*), (7) Truthfulness (*sacca*), (8) Resolution (*adhiṭṭhāna*), (9) Loving-kindness (*metta*), (10) Equanimity (*upekkhā*). Buddhist Dictionary, Nyanatiloka. 2. <https://www.insightmeditationcenter.org/books-articles/articles/theparamis/> Insight Meditation Society.

be noticed and accessible.

It may be helpful to keep in mind that there are no interruptions on retreat. Everything that happens, everything that is noticed, is an opportunity to observe with an intention towards attention.

Hindrances⁴⁴ and Yogi Mind

Not surprisingly, your mind will behave differently while doing a Home Retreat especially when doing your formal meditation. In order not to start your retreat blocking yourself from skillful use of your time, try and try again, not to judge or compare your formal meditations to the best you've ever done or to compare your experience in the Home Retreat to what you've experienced in a formal retreat. Try to make no comparisons at all. Home Retreat is a different practice than a formal residential retreat. The conditions are different and though many of the tools are similar or the same, these skills are being exercised and developed in different ways and under different conditions.

On formal retreat we are provided an environment where the retreat center or the monastery supports a very intense level of sense restraint, and it's where we are further encouraged as individuals to take sense restraint to ever more subtle levels. On Home Retreat we are also practicing sense restraint, but on a much more active and wide ranging level. After all, the practice of Home Retreat is in the world and as a consequence the continuity of concentration will be different than what is generally available on formal retreat. Investigation and effort are being examined at a different level with different intensities. There is much more reflection, more *samapajañña*, than on a formal retreat, and as a consequence during formal meditation our minds will often be more

⁴⁴ Hindrances (*nīvarana*): 1. AN 9:64 'Nivarana Sutta': Hindrances. 2. 'The Noble Eightfold Path: Way to the End of Suffering', Chapter Four. Bhikkhu Bodhi. 3. In common usage the term hindrance means those mental states that prevent the yogi from concentrating the mind on a continuous basis. Yet, because they are so common to the mind stream they are especially rich objects to bring our non-judgemental *sait-sampajañña* towards, to observe in order to learn what happens. allan cooper

active with various kinds of thinking. For most who do Home Retreat, fairly intense mental chatter will be present which, again, will lead to the arising of the hindrances and yogi mind⁴⁵ in very big ways. These are some of the strongest reasons to practice Home Retreat. In order to liberate the mind from sensual desire, ill will and ignorance, the yogi must examine these states of mind in all aspects of life and not just on the cushion. It is the open-handedness of equanimity that permits the mind to mature and change.

The tools and skills that are brought to bear when the mind is scattered or uncooperative while meditating are the same as on a formal meditation retreat; we bring the intention and skills we have to aim our minds to the object and try and try again to maintain and sustain the placing of *sati* onto the object under investigation. What is different on Home Retreat is how much and how often we consciously add a posture of interested non-involved reflective investigation *sampajañña*. The reliance on *sampajañña* during Home Retreat whether doing formal meditation or during our everyday activities is equally important.

The more frequently we combine *sati* with *sampajañña*, the more we train our minds towards the bull's eye of the Buddha's teaching.

Slow Down

This is more important than it would appear on the surface. Aside from your formal sitting/walking practice and your focus on *sampajañña*, slowing down can be the single most useful technique towards the development of continuity of your attention to arise. Slowing down allows time to reflect and it gives time for *sati-sampajañña* to be

⁴⁵ Yogi Mind: A contemporary term to mean when during retreat the mind can manifest any/all of the following: obsession, swings of mood, refusing to cooperate, having the hindrances frequently arising, and/or to be under a cloud of confusion. allan cooper

generated toward the sense object or activity at hand. It is fuel for the cultivation of intention, effort, *sampajañña* and patience. It takes strong restraint and renunciation to slow down which allow for greater intention, energy and investigation to be exercised.

As much as possible during normal everyday activities make physical actions deliberate and couple these actions with a focus towards *sati-sampajañña*. Try to notice actions throughout a sequence. Start with the intention to move and then to the beginning of the actual movement. Watch for when the sequence ends. Hint: When you miss the beginning of any movement, pay particular attention to when you end that movement. For instance, when you put something down, observe. Attending to the end of a movement or the end of any sense object heightens attention throughout and gives rise to a greater probability of picking up the beginning of the next action or sense object. Also, pay particular attention to how often your body makes unconscious types of physical actions such as touching your face or wiggling your foot or scratching an itch or adjusting your glasses or posture while sitting or standing. All is made more clearly known by slowing down as much as possible.

Cultivate Right Speech

The noble factor of Right Speech will become another edge to the practice. *Sampajañña* will serve you as you explore Right Speech. Pause and reflect before you speak. Examine whether or not speaking serves a purpose; notice what that purpose is and run an examination of your intention through the four categories of *sampajañña*. If speaking serves only to self-reference and inflates feelings of well-being, see if there are alternatives to speaking. If not, ask yourself how you might choose to consciously affect what you are saying. If attention is strong, see if you can identify the intention to speak, the feeling tone when speaking, and

the results of speaking on yourself and on others. Check if what you are about to say is suitable to the situation. Ask yourself if the motivation for speaking is pure, unwholesome or mix of both. It is useful to consider the other person and your responsibilities in the community. If silence will make someone uncomfortable or cause confusion, it is Right Speech to offer your best and even chat for a short time. On the other hand, if silence is acceptable, try to use it.

Right Speech is also about listening. What is your posture while listening? Is there judgement, compassion or wanting to say your piece and get the discussion over with? Bring your attention to how you listen and try to add kindness and patience to your process if you hear yourself being unskilful. Just notice and try to listen more carefully. Recognize that the person to whom you are speaking is trying the best he/she can.

Pay Attention to Relationship with Food

Above we discussed how certain things we do are basic to our survival and are therefore hard-wired. Hard-wired motivations make them more difficult to work with but also they can be easier to notice. Food and the socialization that surround eating are both basic to our survival and therefore can be valuable places to watch ourselves.

Of course, when living by oneself, food and eating can be a fairly simple process. When alone we choose what, how and when we eat. In addition, because we are alone we have the choice to try and maintain silence by not reading or listening/watching something while giving our focus toward the *sati* of eating. However, if someone has certain forms of aversion or greed surrounding food, a meal alone can still be a very complex situation. On retreat, set your intention to be as mindful as possible throughout the entire meal preparation, eating, and clean-up process.

Eat at prescribed times. Do not snack unless medically called for. Making hunger an object of mindfulness while formally meditating and/or being out and about can anchor you with a doable, unpleasant object of attention.

Investigate Sleep

Explore how much to sleep and when to sleep. Even on a short formal retreat it is not uncommon to discover that we need only six hours of sleep a night and, on longer retreats, only four or less. The decreased need for sleep can also occur on Home Retreat, although usually to a lesser degree. While on Home Retreat, I try to reduce the amount I sleep by very small amounts each night until I find a healthy balance. There is no right amount for everyone. It depends, in part, on how active and social your day has been and what your body needs. If you are working, for instance, you might not be able to reduce your sleep hours by very much.

Yogis on residential retreats often find themselves naturally waking up earlier and earlier. This process can happen on Home Retreat, too. Waking early can provide support for the mental factors of intention and effort. Incremental development of wholesome patterns deepens one's balance in all activities. Going to bed early and waking early can be very helpful in order to support formal practice in an everyday practice. This is especially helpful during Home Retreat. Napping is another practice edge in the exploration of how much sleep we need. It can be difficult to sleep more than four hours at a stretch while on retreat, which often translates to slumps during the day. A well considered short nap can be skillfully applied. Naps are an edge to practice and can cut. Be careful.

Getting up early gives another hour or two of focus before the rest of the

world wakes. This is important for those who have partners, children, pets, jobs, volunteer work or other chores that must be attended to early and during the retreat. A solid start to your day and making sure you do your formal practice each day are among the most important tools for supporting a Home Retreat. Choosing to get up early also obliges going to bed earlier. Even a casual investigation will reveal that most evening and nighttime activities tend towards leisure which are almost always preference-reinforcing activities. Keep early birds and worms in mind.

Use Chanting, Reflection and Determinations

Regularly scheduled chanting and formal reflections are valuable tools to inspire faith, set intention and galvanize effort. Many yogis find it valuable to pay homage to the Buddha, take refuge in the Buddha/Dhamma/Sangha, take the Precepts,⁴⁶ to share merit (*puñña*),⁴⁷ do *metta*,⁴⁸ and ask and offer forgiveness. Respecting what we do sets wholesome intention and when coupled with wise reflection the practices deepen and the commitment matures. As mentioned above, mealtimes are another excellent opportunity to develop a chanting practice.⁴⁹

Another useful chanting reflection is to do formal forgiveness⁵⁰ for yourself and others. It can be a preliminary practice before every formal meditation session. Apply a silent loving chuckle into the mind stream when you reflect on failures. Remind yourself that you are starting again fresh.

⁴⁶ 'Going for Refuge & Taking the Precepts,' Bhikkhu Bodhi. 2. See Homage, Refuges, and Precepts in the index.

⁴⁷ Merit (*puñña*): 1. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merit_\(Buddhism\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merit_(Buddhism)). Wikipedia. 2. Sharing merit (*puñña-dhāra*), in some variation is to silently or out loud offer phrases such as, "I share whatever merit I have with all beings everywhere so they too, like myself, may attain happiness, peacefulness and complete freedom from suffering." 3. 'Merit: A Study Guide', Thanissaro Bhikkhu., Mudita: 'The Buddha's Teaching on Unselfish Joy,' Access to Insight.

⁴⁸ *Metta* (Loving-kindness): 1. 'The Four Sublime States: Contemplations on Love, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy and Equanimity.' 2. Nyanaponika Thera. Note: Kindness is the balance of all four.

⁴⁹ See mealtime chant in the index.

⁵⁰ See suggestion at end of the Guide.

Other traditional chanting subjects include the *brahma viharas* (the Four Noble Abodes),⁵¹ the *pāramis* (the Ten Perfections),⁵² and forgiveness (*khama*)⁵³. Chanting offers an opportunity to utilize reflection which otherwise is often under-emphasized and therefore under-utilized in Western style *vipassanā* practice. Chanting is also a mirror on the mind's engagement and clarity. When chanting notice whether or not the phrases are being done by rote or if there is a reflective and respectful attention present. Watching carefully offers a way to assess the qualities of investigation, effort and faith (*saddhā*)⁵⁴ and to notice if the hindrances (*nīvaranas*)⁵⁵ are present. Chant in your native tongue or in Pali depending on how you think your character will best benefit. Check this out. Translate your chants and see which works better for you.

Determinations are a tool that are seldom taught to lay yogis. They are done by silently repeating your wholesome intention three times before a sit or at the beginning of the day. Choose the determinations carefully and make sure that whatever it is, that it is appropriate for the circumstance. A few examples: 'May, during this sit, my mindfulness remain unbroken for five (or ten, etc.) minutes.' 'May this practice lead to deeper wisdom.' 'May this practice lead to greater harmlessness in self and others.' Making unreasonable determinations weakens the practice and will create striving, judging and anxiety to enter into the practice. Be careful.

A determination such as, 'May enlightenment arise in this sit,' is not useful despite its wholesome sounding intention. Use determinations

⁵¹ The Four Sublime States (*brahma viharas*): Contemplations on Love, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy and Equanimity, Nyanaponika Thera. http://www.vipassana.com/meditation/four_sublime_states.php.

⁵² *Paramis*: See footnote 42.

⁵³ Forgiveness (*khama*). (*adj.*) forgiving; enduring; bearing. || *khamā* (f.) tolerance; patience; endurance. Wisdom Dictionary.

⁵⁴ Faith (*saddhā*): 1. Faith in early Buddhism focused on the Triple Gem, that is, the Buddha; his teaching (the dharma); and finally, the community of spiritually developed followers or the monastic community seeking enlightenment (the saṅgha). Wikipedia. 2. Faith in a more contemporary understanding will mean to have verified confidence in the meditation, our ability to do the meditation, and the teacher/teachings that have shown us the way. allan cooper

⁵⁵ See footnote 43.

appropriate to time, skill and conditions. Choose your phrases with care and repeat them the same way each time. Then just allow them to be forgotten until the next formal opportunity to do them again. Let them heat up on their own.

Cultivate Patience and *Metta*

A helpful exercise for Home Retreat is to steer the mind/heart towards *metta* and patience while navigating one's chores and errands. If you are like me, going to the grocery store, waiting in a line at the Post Office, or exercising on a treadmill at the gym are chances to cultivate wholesome states of mind. During Home Retreat, you might experiment with doing silent reflection or chanting when these types of situations are present. Is it possible to spread your *metta* towards the clerk checking out your tomatoes or to the person in front of you fumbling with her/his credit card? Home Retreat obliges us to be in contact with others. Use this time as often as possible to cultivate loving attention for self and others. Make this mental state your heart's posture as often as possible.

Experiment with Balance

Keep an eye on balancing your energy and your mental posture. Check in with yourself. Ask yourself if you are striving or becoming lazy. Try to notice if any mental or physical patterns are beginning to become predominant. If they are, try to bring careful non-judgemental *sati-sampajañña* to the situation and apply whatever your wisdom calls you to do. Then assess the results. Example: Laziness seems to arise with frequent thoughts about how difficult this is or how I might not sit the next scheduled sit. Bring attention, cultivate some investigation, allow some energy/effort to seep in, and make a determination to sit.

Meditation practice deepens and enlightenment has the potential to arise

when balance of the Five Spiritual faculties (*indriya-samatta*)⁵⁶ is achieved. The fulcrum of both wisdom and compassion is balance in one's own mind.

Include Dharma Study

Before the retreat and before you set your intended everyday schedule, read Nyanaponika's commentary on *sampajañña* in *The Heart of Buddhist of Meditation* (even if you have read it before), and reread both these Home Retreat instructions and Nyanaponika's commentary at least once during the retreat. Reflect on both and apply how you understand the four categories as they apply to your intentions for Home Retreat. Ask yourself, 'How can I apply these lessons in my daily life during this retreat?' The four categories of *sampajañña* are practical pointers and are for experimenting in applied action throughout the retreat. *When you read this Guide make sure you understand the footnotes and the indexes. Don't just gloss over them. Read them deeply and make them objects of study and reflection.* Go to the source material in the footnotes. If you do, you will support intention and effort and you will get a better perspective on what and why this training can support you on your path to liberation.

Should you have time beyond the study of the above reading suggestions, you can make time each day for some formal scriptural study related to the practice; read *only* during a prescribed time in the day unless your job or circumstances obliges you to do so, and read only from the list of material you chose *before* the retreat. For example, if you want to read a particular book or *sutta*, get it before the retreat and then read a little bit and reflect. The choices of subjects are almost endless, but what is important is to read within a small arc of salient subjects that relate to Home Practice and/or Home Retreat. Do not jump around to

⁵⁶ See footnote 41.

new ideas and new areas of study; this only encourages choice and preferences. You won't go wrong by staying with the Naynopokika's Heart of Buddhist Meditation, Bhikkhu Bodhi's The Noble Eightfold Path, and this Guide and footnotes.

Practical podcasts or videos of Dhamma Talks or study material can be very helpful in lieu of having a live Dhamma talk. If you choose to use these mediums, make as much effort as possible to listen or watch with your full attention from the beginning to its end. Do not listen while driving or doing other activities. Give your full attention to the dhamma.

On Home Retreat, study that supports practical aspects of practice is what will support you best. Leave abstract study and intellectual thinking for another time. Limit light reading or, better yet, eliminate it altogether. Do not read after a thought like, 'Oh, maybe I could read a bit right now. I've got a few minutes before my appointment,' or after you hear your internal voice say, 'I need a break, and reading the *Dhamma* is more wholesome than some other activity.' This type of reading is more about distraction and less about practice. Giving in to this type of thought/action conditions the mind more towards preference than towards the material to be read. When these types of thoughts arise, whether it is about reading or exercising, checking email or offering yourself some entertainment, try to sit for a couple of minutes, watch the boredom/restlessness, no matter how subtle, and see what happens to the thoughts/sensations. Do they increase/decrease/stay the same? Our job is simply to observe and be present for whatever changes occur. If patient observation is not appropriate in the situation, try to do a few moments of *metta*. Then carry on with your schedule.

Tip: Staying on topic gives the mind a chance to have a mental anchor (like the breath does in the body, physically) which gives perspective

when preferences and/or boredom arise.

Use Daily and End-of-Retreat Reviews

Late in the day before your last sit, review how the day went. Do this with as much kindness and curiosity as possible. Some find a five-to-ten minute journaling or reflection about an incident during the day can bring greater clarity and stimulate effort the next day. You can choose one incident (skillful or unskillful) to review, or perhaps conduct an overview of what type of mental factors were most predominant throughout the day. Examine the quality of the intention that preceded the incident, the quality of thought/speech/action that accompanied the incident, and the consequences both for the short and long term. With active non-judgmental analysis, take a look at what might be done should something similar arise in the future.

As you do this exercise, notice if judgement is accompanying the assessment of the incident or if there's space to simply observe. In either case, notice the judgement or the space and continue your review with an eye towards kindness. Ask yourself, 'How can I improve or tweak the practice tomorrow to support my stated goals? How can I use this time for increased friendliness through training and investigation?'

Finally, at the end of the Home Retreat, make an appointment with your wise friend to review what you've done and what you've learned during the retreat. Be meticulously honest with yourself and the person with whom you are speaking, and report what your intentions were at the beginning of the retreat, what you did, what you didn't do, what you learned and what you want to improve during the next Home Retreat.

Conclusions: Seeing the Results of Practice

The above are some of the techniques I have found useful when planning and practicing a Home Retreat. Many of these instructions will apply to you but some won't. After you experiment, you'll discover those that are useful to you, those that are not and some new ones that will come from your own wisdom as the retreat unfolds. You'll also likely notice that what is useful on one Home Retreat may or may not be as useful on another. Let your criteria of what is useful be what helps to sustain continuity of attention in your *sati-sampajañña*. ***Be careful not to confuse easy and pleasant for wise and skillful practice.***

By training ourselves with Home Retreats we provide immeasurable benefits both in the short and the long haul. We functionally strengthen the indeterminate mental factors⁵⁷ such as intention, effort, concentration, etc. towards their default, linking with wholesomeness and learning how to apply them both during formal practice *and* in our everyday activities. The indeterminate mental factors are those states of mind that by themselves have no intrinsic qualities of wholesomeness or unwholesomeness. They can be strengthened or weakened by their use or non-use if exercised consciously or when allowed to weaken unconsciously. They accompany all thought, speech and action and can be used for wholesome or unwholesome ends.

By training the mind to couple wholesomeness with these indeterminate mental factors, we bring greater wholesome results into all our daily activities. The results are easy to see. As an example, we need only to look at whether or not to increase our energy at times when more energy may be needed, or when investigation may be needed, to see if it is easier or more difficult to access these skills. The more we do these exercises with intention and continuity, the more our mental culture and meditative momentum will deepen. Training the mind with

⁵⁷ 'The *Abhidhamma* in Practice', N.K.G. Mendis. Section 'The *Cetasikas*,' sub category, '*Sankharas*.' Access to Insight.

wholesomeness combined with intention guarantees new skills both at our next formal retreat and in our everyday lives.

Continuity of wholesomeness in all activities is the lynch pin, and balance is the grease. Home Practice and Home Retreat are the active forces at play.

A path towards spiritual freedom becomes a reality when all our experience, no matter what that experience might be, is met with a wholesome and accepting hand and an open heart coupled with *sati-sampajañña*. A day that is going according to plan is as valuable as a day full of interruptions and resistance when it is met with wise attention. Remind yourself as often as possible *that pleasant practice is not necessarily good practice*. Friendliness towards self and others, adapting to the unexpected and investigation with no fixed agenda are all tools that will support your practice's momentum, maturity and integration.

V. Index:

Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Noble Path:

1. All life knows suffering/dissatisfaction. Nobody gets what they want out of life.
2. The cause of suffering is ignorance (of reality) and clinging. Wanting becomes the problem.
3. There is a way to end suffering/dissatisfaction. By learning how not to want it.
4. This is the way to end suffering: The Eightfold Path.
 - a. Right Understanding - Learning the nature of reality and the truth about life.
 - b. Right Aspiration/Intention - Making the commitment to live in such a way that our suffering/dissatisfaction can end.
 - c. Right Speech - Speaking the truth in a helpful and compassionate way.
 - d. Right Conduct/Action - Living a life consistent with universal wholesomeness.
 - e. Right Livelihood - Earning a living in a way that doesn't harm self or others.
 - f. Right Effort - Just Do It. No Excuses...with balance and kindness.
 - g. Right Mindfulness - Applying *sati-sampajañña* in all activities.
 - h. Right Concentration - Expanding our consciousness through meditation.

Dan Bammes/allan cooper

Chanting:

Paying Homage to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, Taking Refuge and the Precepts:

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā-sambuddhassa (3x)

Translation: Homage to Him, the Blessed One, the Perfected One, the Fully Self-Enlightened One.

Ti-Sarana

Buddham saranam gacchāmi.

Dhammam saranam gacchāmi.

Sangham saranam gacchāmi.

Dutiyampi Buddham...

Tatīyampi Buddham...

Translation: **The Three Refuges**

I go to the Buddha as my refuge.

I go to the Dhamma - [The Teachings,] as my refuge.

I go to the Sangha - [The Community,] as my refuge.

For the second time I go to the Buddha as my refuge...

For the third time I go to the Buddha as my Refuge...

Panca-sila Five Precepts and the Eight Precepts

1. *Pānātipātā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.*
2. *Adinnādānā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.*
3. *Abrahmacariyā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi (celibate, monastic or on retreat). 3b. Kāmesu micchācārā veramanī vikkhāpadam samādiyāmi. (Householder.)*
4. *Musāvādā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.*
5. *Surā-meraya-majja-pamādatthānā veranī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.*
6. *Vikāla-bhojanā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.*
7. *Nacca gīta vādita visūkadassana mālāgandha vilepana dhārana mandana vibūsanatthānā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.*
8. *Uccāsayana mahāsayanā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.*

Idam me silam magga-phala nāṇassa paccayo hotu.

Teacher: Appamādena sampādettha. (Accomplish the training with mindfulness.)

Reply: Āma Bhante. (Yes, Bhante.)

Sādhu, sādhu, sādhu. (Wholesomely spoken, wholesomely spoken..., or well said, well...)

Translation: The Five Precepts/Eight Precepts

1. I undertake the training to abstain from harming any living being.
2. I undertake the training to abstain from taking things not freely given.
3. I undertake the training to abstain from sexual misconduct. (On retreat for everyone and for monastics all the time: I undertake the training rule to refrain from all sexual activity.)
4. I undertake the training to abstain from false speech, abusive speech, harsh speech and idle chatter.
5. I undertake the training to abstain from all types of intoxication that lead to heedlessness. (Any mind altering drug or activity.)
6. I undertake the training to refrain from taking food at improper times (after midday until dawn the following day). (This can be interpreted to mean not to overeat, eat frequently, eat for pleasure, eat mindlessly, and/or eat for beauty.)

7. I undertake the training to refrain from dancing, singing, music, shows and from the use of garlands, perfumes, cosmetics, adornments and ornaments. (This can be interpreted to mean to not distract yourself with entertainment and self-beautification.)
8. I undertake the training to refrain from using high and luxurious seats (or) beds. (This rule may be considered archaic for most of us.)

May this sīla of mine be condition for attainment of path and fruition knowledge.

A useful forgiveness training chant:

To those whom I may have caused harm, knowingly or unknowingly, through my thoughts, word and/or actions, I ask your forgiveness.

To those who may have caused me harm, knowingly or unknowingly, through their thoughts, words and/or actions, I offer my forgiveness as best I am able.

For any harm I may have caused myself, knowingly or unknowingly, through my thoughts, words and/or actions, I offer my forgiveness as best I am able.

May I be mindful of my thoughts, words and actions so that I may not be the cause of further pain and suffering in this world.

May the merit of these efforts help to ease the pain and suffering in this world. P. Moffet/et al

Food/meal chant:

I take this food not to beautify the body nor for sensual pleasure but to enable me to practice Buddha Sasana, so that existing disease may be cured and new disease not arise and so that I may be comfortable in the four bodily positions.

I vow to eat this food with appropriate mindfulness and gratitude.

Suggested reading list for Home Practice Retreat:

- a. 'The Heart of Buddhist Meditation,' Nyanaponika Thera. Special attention to the sections on Clear Comprehension.
- b. 'The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to the End of Suffering,' Bhikkhu Bodhi.
- c. 'Everyman's Ethics: Four Discourses of the Buddha,' Adapted from the translations of Narada Thera, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandi, Sri Lanka.
https://www.bps.lk/olib/wh/wh014_Narada_Everymans-Ethics--Four-Discourses-of-Buddha.pdf.
- d. 'Living This Life Fully: Stories and Teachings of Munindra,' by Mirka Knaster.
- e. 'A Treatise on the Paramis': From the Commentary to the Cariyapitaka, Acariya Dhammapala,

Translated from the Pali by Bhikkhu Bodhi.

f. 'Buddhist Dictionary; Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines.' Nyanatiloka.

g. 'Manual of Insight,' Mahasi Sayadaw. Translated by: Vipassana Mettā Foundation Translation Committee.

h. The Suttas.

i. The Path of Purification.

j. The Abhidhamma.

Abbreviations in footnotes: AN: Āṅguttara Nikāya, DN: Dingha Nikāya, MN: Majjhima Nikāya, SN: Saṃyutta Nikāya

Template for activities of daily living and necessary human activities:

Below is a template to help the Home Retreat meditator create for his/herself a schedule. Some of the categories and some of the examples within a category will not be specific to you or your schedule and needs. Use the template as a way to investigate and develop a schedule that will work for you.

Domestic Conditions:

1. Discuss your retreat with your family/housemates and explain to them what it is you are doing and see if they are willing to understand and/or support you.
2. Be clear about your agreements and make sure the others understand what you understand.
3. If agreements don't hold, especially if they are with children, simply notice, try not to redirect and watch your inner reactions.

Job/responsibilities:

1. Make as many short periods of *sati-sampajañña* happen as possible as described in the text.
2. Cultivate micro moments of mindfulness.

Activities of daily living/chores/errands/social:

1. Chores; Groceries/household necessities once a week (?). Bring a list and stick to it. No online shopping. Limit choices.
2. Keep house clean, orderly. When cleaning, do it deliberately and slowly.
3. Misc: As needed activities and arising stuff to be done during scheduled times as much as possible.
4. Slow down all physical movements with an intention towards the cultivation of a friendly gentleness.
5. Limit non-essential social interactions. Non-essential? Examine.

Health/Body:

1. Waking/sleep: Search for the appropriate hours of sleep (9 p.m. to 2 or 3 a.m.?). About six hours or less. Create structure and balance. Make a schedule and keep to it as much as possible. If naps become necessary be very careful and watch intention and aversion.
2. Go to bed early, get up early.
3. Food: Simplify, lighten and lessen. Decrease caffeine. Avoid rich/fried foods, avoid sugar except fruit. Take the Sixth Precept? Chant before a meal? Eat slowly and attentively.

Watch preferences.

4. Exercise as needed. Reduce if not necessary.
5. Appropriate speech while engaged in exercise if in a public setting.
6. Limit or abstain from sexual activity during retreat.

Practice:

1. Report intended schedule and study focus to a *kalyanamitta* before and after retreat.
2. Commit to however long the retreat is to last even if energy is lagging.
3. Commit to formal practice x/number of hours a day.
4. Incorporate frequent mini moments of mindfulness and cultivate *sampajañña* as often as possible.
5. End each formal meditation with sharing merit or *metta*? Examine and explore resistance.
6. If possible during activities, stop what is happening with the body, pause, feel and then reflect on *sampajañña* and *appamada* (headfulness). Watch if the thinking/judging/controlling deluded mind is present. See what happens while observing. What happens to story? Return to activity.
7. Overview: restrain the senses per personal edge, ***slow down physical movements***, be deliberate/precise with the body and do things with as much kindness as is available in each moment. Bring to focus kindness to animate and inanimate objects alike.
8. ***Pay very careful attention to speech.*** As often as possible notice how habitual speech patterns arise. Reboot as often as possible with restraint and *metta*/kindness for self and others. Keep an eye on tone and pattern of inner chatter.
9. ***Slow down!***
10. Cultivate generous kindness in any personal interaction. Watch grumpy and complaining mind.
11. Volunteer when appropriate.
12. Offer a gift/kindness/*dana* to someone each day ***and*** an organization/resource/teacher at the end of the retreat. Take the time and actively visualize the benefits of the *dana*.
13. Limit speech when doing chores and errands and limit speech to what is necessary, useful and kind. If waiting in a line or otherwise not actively using purposeful attention while out and around, center the body and do *metta* or mindfulness or reflection.
14. Attend with a detached observing mind as often as possible to one's own inner chatter. Simply notice with kindness. Apply what is known about patterns of thought and language.

Study:

1. Choose subject and stay on point.
2. Re-read retreat template daily.
3. Read and study the footnotes and links.

Entertainment:

1. Limit screen time aside from study and necessary communications. Make a time limit and at scheduled times.
2. Carefully attend each time the phone is touched for whatever reason. Attend to when intention is felt and the action throughout the process.
3. Limit email to just what is necessary in order to keep up with business and social

responsibilities. No new threads.

4. No recreational reading.
5. No recreational TV/streaming/YouTube.
6. No news.
7. As often as possible attend to what pleasures/pleasantnesses arise in taste when eating/drinking/brushing teeth, or the body at the gym, etc. visual objects while hiking, etc., sounds hiking/garden, etc., smells while cooking/gardening, etc., and whatever pleasant/unpleasant thoughts arise with special attention to the habit of tone and pattern, etc. Cultivate a perspective of the consequences of pleasure; kamma, and dependent origination.

VI. Biography

Allan Cooper has practiced *vipassanā* and *samatha* meditation since 1974. His primary teachers are the Burmese meditation master Sayadaw U Pandita, his student, Sayadaw U Vivekananda, Abbott of Panditarama International Meditation Center, and Joseph Goldstein, co-founder of Insight Meditation Society. Allan is a retired hospice and mental health RN, and has been teaching meditation and leading retreats for over 15 years.

VII. Dana/Donations

This Home Retreat Guide is offered without a price tag. It is for the use of anyone who wishes to use it, it is free which also means that, 'the Dhamma is priceless,' and therefore one cannot be charged money for its transmission.

True.

This Guide took 30 years of practice and two years of writing to complete. It has had a financial cost to prepare as will the website to present and keep available for the benefit of others. Should this Guide serve you, or you are inspired by the open handedness of this process and feel motivated to practice generosity, you can send Allan Cooper at 510 Broken Arrow Dr., Silver City, NM, 88061, USA any donation your heart is open to sharing.

VIII. For Free Distribution

You may copy, reformat, reprint, republish, and redistribute this work in any medium whatsoever without the author's permission, provided that: (1) such copies, etc. are made available free of any charge; (2) any translations of this work state that they are derived therefrom; (3) any derivations of this work state that they are derived and differ therefrom; and (4) you include the full text of this license in any copies, translations or derivations of this work. Otherwise, all rights reserved.

9/2018