

Noble Silence

(We thank our friends at the Mid-Atlantic Vipassana Network for this article)

Retreats are held in complete silence. This helps conserve energy for the work of meditation – energy which is ordinarily dissipated through talking. There is an intimate link between the forces that drive conversation (“external dialogue”) and the forces that agitate the mind (“internal dialogue”).

Maintaining silence at retreats aids in clarifying and working through these forces, thus helping to develop an abiding state of inner calm.

Please observe noble silence meticulously and if approached by a retreatant about this, accept their reminder with loving-kindness.

Some people interpret noble silence to include avoiding eye contact. If you find this too impersonal, certainly feel free to make eye contact that radiates loving-kindness. Please be aware however, that if some retreatants avert their gaze, they are not being unfriendly!

To aid in Noble Silence:

- Turn off beepers and alarms on digital watches. Do not bring watches or clocks that “tick” into the Meditation Hall.
- All questions regarding housekeeping, retreat protocol, the dharma, etc. can be communicated in writing and posted on the bulletin board near the Tea Table, except for serious emergencies. Please check the board for responses. This also ensures the retreat organizers are not unnecessarily disturbed from their retreat.
- If you must communicate with someone in an emergency, please tap him or her on the shoulder and leave the hall together for your conversation. Special needs or questions can be directed to the Retreat Manager on duty, whose name will be posted. Again, unless it is urgent, these needs and requests can be communicated in writing on the message board.