

# Residential Retreats: Guidelines to Living Mindfully

With thanks to Shell Fisher/La Sarmiento (Jun 26 2013) at IMCW for this.

## **Meditation Hall Etiquette**

Retreat schedules will be posted everywhere, and bells will be rung prior to a formal sit or dharma talk.

Being on time to sits and attending the Morning Instructions & Dharma Talks is very important. Morning instruction is a time when you may ask questions of teachers and is also the time for housekeeping announcements. Both the morning instructions and evening Dharma talk will help guide your practice as the retreat deepens.

Remove shoes, coats, and Velcro fasteners *prior* to entering the meditation hall.

When arriving late cannot be avoided, practice mindfulness while settling into your space, especially about the noise you might be making.

Although we are very relaxed with tradition here in the West, please do not lie down during the evening Dharma talks. You may lie down during other sits if your health requires.

Mindful stretching is encouraged between sits. However, unless a session is being given in mindful movement, please do your full stretching routines, yoga asanas, Tai Chi sets outside the meditation hall. Managers will suggest areas for this.

If you need a chair, please arrange them along the perimeter and behind those sitting on zafus to leave paths for others to move freely through the hall.

Please remember that as the retreat deepens, others may choose to remain sitting during walking periods, meals, late at night and/or early in the morning. A mindful transition from sitting to walking begins as we stand and begin to move about the hall. This honors the silence and supports the continuity of mindfulness from one moment to the next.

Please remember that scented body products (even “natural” scents) may trigger allergic reactions for some retreatants. Please use only fragrance-free products while on retreat.

When you sense a sneeze or cough arising, plan ahead and muffle it into the crook of your elbow or shawl.

# Maintaining a Fragrance-Free Retreat

By Shell Fisher/La Sarmiento | Jun 26 2013

Though this issue may be unfamiliar to you, there are a growing number of people who are sensitive to commonly used items.

This condition or disability is known as multiple chemical sensitivities (MCS) and involves people who have developed an acute sensitivity to various chemicals in the environment.

People with MCS experience a range of debilitating physical reactions, some even life-threatening, to chemicals used in a variety of products, including fragrances and personal care products which include “natural” or aromatherapy body products.

The most problematic substances are:

Aftershave  
Essential oils and body lotions  
Fabric softener  
Fragranced shampoos  
Gels/hairsprays  
Laundry detergent  
Perfume/cologne  
Some deodorants  
Sunscreen

## How can I be fragrance free at the retreat?

- I can wear clothes laundered in fragrance-free laundry detergent and avoid laundry softeners such as “Bounce.”
- I can use fragrance-free soap and shampoo and hair products.
- I can use fragrance-free lotion and avoid cologne, aftershave lotion, and perfume.

We are not suggesting that people stop using items that are medically necessary.

As we look to make our community accessible to everyone, you can help make this happen by refraining from using scented personal care products at the retreat. Thank you so much for your consideration.