



Insight Retreat Center

NEWSLETTER

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Volunteer: Help Care for IRC

IRC is run entirely by volunteers. The continuing support from our volunteers allows us to take care of the center and offer retreats. Join us at a Work Day, fill out a Volunteer Form, and consider the following opportunities:

- **Resident Volunteers:** Typically, four Resident Volunteers live at IRC for extended periods. They assist with much of the background work needed for running retreats and maintaining the building and grounds.
 - **Have a Truck?** We periodically need help picking up plants or other items that require a truck, or hauling something away.
 - **Gardening and Grounds-keeping:** Both skilled and unskilled people to help maintain the landscape and grounds during non-retreat times.
 - **Handypersons:** Help with the maintenance of the property.
 - **Volunteer Coordinator:** Meets and places new volunteers and organizes and coordinate current volunteers. Time Commitment: 6 to 8 hours a month.
 - **Fundraising Coordinator:** Coordinates fundraising efforts for upcoming fundraising.
- To volunteer, please fill out a Volunteer Form on the website or email:
insightretreatcenter@gmail.com

Work Days

- Saturday, September 13: 9am to 4pm
- Other monthly work days will be announced on our website.

RSVP on our website's [Workdays](#) link, or contact Eileen: 650/269-5801 or messina.eileen@gmail.com.

Garden Days

Help with the gardens, paths and landscape! Contact Evan Wong for details:
gardening@insightretreatcenter.org

Practicing with Sleep During Retreats

by Gil Fronsdal

Meditation retreats are wonderful opportunities to bring mindfulness to all aspects of our daily routines. As a large part of every 24 hours is spent sleeping, retreat practice includes being mindful and intentional about our sleep. This is particularly relevant because people's sleep patterns and needs often change in this setting. With these changes, our relationship to sleep may shift as well. Approached with mindfulness and wisdom, our relationship with sleep can be an important arena for discovering freedom.

First Days—Settling In

It is not uncommon for people to be tired the first day or so of a retreat. Sometimes this is because they have not been getting enough sleep in their daily lives. Sometimes it is because preparing for and traveling to the retreat can be taxing, especially if it means being busier than usual in the days preceding the retreat. For these reasons, it is wise to simply recognize first-day tiredness as just first-day tiredness. Sleeping in during the first morning or taking a nap after lunch can be appropriate. It is particularly useful to learn how to avoid being angry, frustrated, or discouraged for being tired. There is no need to fight against this tiredness.

Occasionally people do not sleep well the first night or two on retreat. There are many reasons for this. It can be from uneasiness from being with many strangers or it can be from sleeping in a new place. Sometimes it can be from enthusiasm or nervousness about being on retreat. If sleeplessness is caused by anxiety, it is best to try to avoid being anxious about the anxiousness. Rather it is helpful to bring simple, equanimous mindfulness to the anxiety. It may also be reassuring to know that retreats generally are some of the safest places to be. Fellow retreatants' intention to be mindful and free of obsessions on retreat brings forth kindness and goodwill and creates an environment of openness and harmlessness. It is also helpful to know that when the wake-up bell rings, it is fine to sleep longer if this is clearly what is needed.

Changing Sleep Patterns

It is fairly common to experience different sleep on retreat than at home. Some people find they sleep more deeply; others sleep more lightly. Some will dream more vividly, others dream less – perhaps with no memory of dreaming at all. Some retreatants will discover they need more sleep while others will find they need less. “Morning people” may discover they do very well getting up to start meditating before the wake-up bell and then going to bed before the last evening sitting. “Evening people” may prefer to stay up late, practicing well beyond the last scheduled meditation.

Given the many individual variations in how sleep is experienced, it is best to avoid having a fixed idea about how sleep should be on retreat. Retreats are a good place to experiment with sleep, learning from the consequences. Too much sleep may cause grogginess; more importantly, too long of a nighttime gap without meditation may interrupt the momentum of the practice. Too little sleep may leave us with less energy to practice through the day. As we learn from these experiments we can adjust accordingly in subsequent days.

Sometimes more sleep is needed on retreats than at home. This may be particularly true when important psychological, emotional, and interpersonal issues become part of the retreat experience. If these experiences are exhausting, sleep may provide both needed rest and a chance for subconscious processing or sorting.

On one week or longer retreats some participants discover that their need for sleep decreases. This may be because retreat life is simpler and less taxing than their daily life. Or it may be that meditation provides a deep rest which substitutes for sleep. Sometimes strong states of concentration are energizing enough to allow for less sleep.

Working Mindfully with Sleep and Dreams

Going to sleep and waking up are important periods on retreats. These are times many people are not mindful, giving in to old atti-

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Other Ways to Donate

New! Amazon Smile is a simple and automatic way to support IRC every time you shop through Amazon, at no cost to you. Go to insightretreatcenter.org/smile.

Donate Your Car — You can make a tax-deductible donation of a vehicle you no longer want, working or not. The *Center for Car Donations* will handle pick-up and all paperwork needed; IRC will receive 75% of the sale price. Tell them you want to donate to Insight Retreat Center. Call 877/411-3662 and a helpful representative will schedule your pick-up appointment and guide you through the process.

E-Scrip — Register your grocery club card and credit/debit cards with E-scrip and the participating merchants will donate a small percentage of your purchases to IRC. You keep all your credit card rewards. Register at www.escrip.com; Group ID is 238528.

Ebay Giving Works — A simple and easy way to recycle your unwanted possessions and support IRC at the same time. Go to: insightretreatcenter.org/e-giving

Help IRC when Buying or Selling Your Home

Carol Collins is an IMC sangha member and long-time local real estate broker, now retired. If you are buying or selling your home, she can be available as a consultant through the whole process at no charge, refer you to a realtor, and the realtor will make a donation in your name to our Retreat Center.

She has facilitated this process for sangha members in San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz and other Bay Area counties. If you have real estate questions, or would like to discuss buying or selling your home, contact Carol, carolcollins888@gmail.com or 408/348-1385.

IRC Email List

For future e-mail newsletters & updates, please subscribe to our email list at www.insightretreatcenter.org

Schedule of Retreats 2014–2015

Insight Retreats are opportunities to engage in full-time mindfulness training. A daily retreat schedule involves periods of sitting and walking meditation, instructions, dharma talks, work meditation, and practice discussion with teachers. Silence is maintained throughout most of the retreat.

- **Oct 10–12** Insight Retreat with Ines Freedman & Carla Brennan
- **Oct 15–17** Insight Retreat with Ajahn Amaro
- **Oct 19–26** Insight Retreat with Gil Fronsdal & Ruth King
- **Nov 16–23** Insight Retreat with Gil Fronsdal & Max Erdstein
- **Dec 1–6** Insight Santa Cruz Retreat with Bob Stahl, Jill Hyman, Bruce Hyman and Karen Zellin (yoga).
- **Dec 7–14** Insight Retreat with Gil Fronsdal & Andrea Fella
- **Dec 27–Jan 4, 2015** New Year's Meditation Retreat with Aloka Vihara Nuns (To register, visit Saranaloka Foundation, saranaloka.org)
- **Jan 14–19, 2015** Zen Sesshin with Paul Haller (reg. opens 9/14/14)
- **Jan 25–Feb 1, 2015** Insight Retreat with Gil Fronsdal, Joanna Harper & Vinny Ferraro (reg. opens 9/25/14)
- **Feb 17–21, 2015** Insight Retreat with Gil Fronsdal & John Travis (reg. opens 10/17)
- **Mar 17–29, 2015** Experienced Practitioner Insight Retreat with Gil Fronsdal & Andrea Fella (reg. opens 11/17/14)
- **Apr 5–12, 2015** Insight Dialogue Retreat with Gregory Kramer (reg. opens 12/5/14)
- **May 14–17, 2015** Insight Retreat with Ines Freedman and Max Erdstein (reg. opens 1/14/15)
- **May 29–Jun 5, 2015** Insight Retreat with Gil Fronsdal, Nikki Mirghafori, and Matthew Brensilver (reg. opens 1/29/15)
- **June 23–28, 2015** Insight Retreat in Spanish with Rebecca Bradshaw and Andrea Castillo (reg. opens 2/23/15)
- **July 5–19, 2015** Mindfulness of Mind Retreat with Andrea Fella (reg. opens 2/5/15)
- **Sep 13–27, 2015** 14-Day Insight Retreat with Gil Fronsdal (reg. opens 4/13/15)

To register, for schedule changes, additions and more, visit:
insightretreatcenter.org/retreats/
or email info@insightretreatcenter.org



A Day with Joseph Goldstein

On July 28, Joseph Goldstein visited IRC and offered a rich afternoon of teachings and discussion to a group of meditators who had all benefited from long retreats. For IRC the date was auspicious. It had been exactly ten years since Joseph was the featured guest at IMC's inaugural event raising funds to allow us to offer retreats entirely on a dana basis.

Little did we imagine then that not only would we be offering dana-only retreats, but that we would be offering them in our own beautiful retreat center. Two years after that inaugural event, a donor made the substantial initial donation that made creating IRC a real possibility, and a search for just the right venue began in earnest.

Fast forward four years, during which many people generously contributed the funds, the planning, and the hard work to make the possibility a reality. The search concluded, the purchase made, the renovations complete, IRC held its first retreat in October, 2012. Only a little over eight years had passed since that inaugural event with Joseph. Being reminded of the arc of this history made Joseph's July visit especially sweet.

Everyone can share in the event by listening to Joseph's simple and profound words about mindfulness, available at: irc.audiodharma.org/retreats/84.

Practicing with Sleep, cont'd

tudes and thought patterns instead. It can be very supportive to one's practice to be mindful and intentional just before falling asleep and when first waking up. Prior to falling asleep can be a time to check in with oneself and take stock of how one is, and then to consciously bring to mind whatever wisdom, understanding, or intention that may contribute to an inspired and contented state of mind. Sometimes doing a few minutes of loving-kindness meditation while lying in bed can be meaningful, perhaps helping in getting deeper sleep.

How we fall asleep may also affect how we wake up. Spending a few minutes meditating in bed before going to sleep may make it more likely that we begin to be mindful as we wake up. Similarly, when waking up in the morning, spending even a few minutes meditating while still laying down or sitting up in bed can create a good foundation for meditation throughout the day.

When dreams are strong enough or seem significant enough to warrant attention, on mindfulness retreats the approach is to bring mindfulness to the emotions and body sensations that linger after the dream, rather than analyze the content of the dreams. Just as we don't get involved in stories and interpretations of what is happening while we meditate, so, while on retreat, we don't do this with

dreams. But we don't ignore the impact of strong dreams. Because in Insight meditation, the "royal road to the unconscious" is through the body, practicing mindfulness of the body with the emotions that remain from a dream is an effective way for our inner life to unfold.

Persistent Sleepiness

Even if one has a sufficient amount of sleep, there are many reasons for tiredness during meditation retreats, each with its own antidote. Tiredness during the day may be a sign of sinking into calmness or complacency. While calmness is usually helpful, it needs to be balanced with the appropriate energy and effort. Therefore applying more physical or mental effort can be useful when feeling tired. This might be, for example, sitting up straighter or doing walking meditation, perhaps even fast walking. Other times tiredness is a product of boredom, discouragement, or resistance. In such cases, patient perseverance and/or investigation of these states can be helpful. If emotional overwhelm is the reason for tiredness, it is sometimes best to take a break and do something comforting such as walking outside looking at nature or having a cup of tea.

Some people find it helpful to have a short nap every day during a retreat. The usual advice is to keep such naps short. The longer the nap, the more we interrupt the continuity and momentum of our meditation practice.

For those who like to nap, it is recommended they experiment with one ten to fifteen minute nap per day. This may be long enough to be rejuvenating while also maintaining the benefits of continuity of practice.

It is important to learn to practice with tiredness and sleepiness and to develop the skill to keep meditating in spite of being tired. It can be very helpful to learn to not struggle while at the same time continuing with the meditation practice the best we can. Times of dullness, lethargy, lack of focus, and the drifting mind associated with drowsiness can all be seen as times for strengthening equanimity and the capacity to repeatedly start over with mindfulness – maybe every few seconds. Sometimes a bit of sleepiness can even be helpful for meditation because there is less energy available for being distracted.

Because sleep is an aspect of the retreat, it can be important to tell a retreat teacher about your sleep, especially if your sleep patterns or experiences change significantly from your usual pattern. It may also be helpful to discuss with a teacher any persistent tiredness that appears during the retreat.

A meditation retreat is meant to be a safe, meaningful, and supportive environment to engage in a practice and a path of meditation, liberation and compassion. Hopefully it is also a supportive environment in which to sleep deeply and contentedly.

Mindfulness of Hand Washing

The ordinary activities of daily life can provide easy opportunities for practicing mindfulness and compassion. One such activity at IRC that brings many benefits is hand washing. Hand washing provides a "hands on" opportunity to bring a high level of mindfulness to performing a simple task. It is a time to practice mindfulness of the body as we stand at the sink and bring our hands together in a clear, purposeful activity.

Hand washing can be a time to notice if we are in a hurry, distracted, or indifferent to the value of being present for a commonplace activity. It is also an opportunity to experience the satisfaction of letting go into the simplicity of one activity.

IRC hand washing is also an important way to care for the retreat community. As most of us know, the most common way colds are spread is through touching objects someone else recently touched with germ-laden hands. Even if you are not sick, your hands can easily pick up germs that you then pass on to others. Avoiding spreading colds is a way to support the retreat experience for everyone and is crucial for people with compromised immune systems.

Just as one isn't finished with mindfulness of breathing after just a few breaths, so the simple practice of hand washing is not something that loses its value after a few times. Repeated and thorough hand washing can be a vehicle for developing the path of mindfulness. It is also a way to regularly care for and practice generosity to our fellow retreatants.

Introducing JoAnna Harper and Vinny Ferraro

In January 2015 Joanna Harper and Vinny Ferraro, who share wide experience working with students, at-risk youth and incarcerated people, will teach a silent retreat with Gil.

JoAnna has been exploring spiritual traditions for fifteen years—the last ten in the Insight tradition—and is part of the current crop of Spirit Rock/IMS/IMC teacher trainees. She has also been trained in the Ojai Foundation's council facilitation program. JoAnna teaches both youth and adults in meditation retreats and classes, and is the mother of two children. Both JoAnna and Vinny were trained as teachers by Noah Levine at Against the Stream.

Vinny Ferraro grew up tough on the streets of New Haven, Connecticut and at age 20 began recovering from drug addiction and dedicating his life to serving others at the same time. He led youth groups in rehab centers, juvenile halls, schools and halfway houses for ten years before moving toward mindfulness practice and work in emotional intelligence. Vinny has worked with the Zen Hospice Program and has trained professionals who work with at-risk youth in using mindfulness-based practices to deal with their own stress and anxiety. He was training director of the Mind-Body Awareness Project, and more recently has been involved with Mindful Schools. He also leads the San Francisco Urban Dharma group.

Reflections on Creating IMC and IRC

As IRC begins a new round of fundraising, this time to expand the premises by buying the property next door, I have been reflecting on what we have created at IMC and IRC.

In my twenties, when I first starting practicing Zen, I had the fortune to live at all three of San Francisco Zen Center's practice centers. At the time, I viewed these three centers as established institutions, even though they were less than ten years old. As I plunged into Zen practice I took for granted the facilities in which I practiced.

Only recently have I realized how ignorant I was about the fact that those facilities existed due to the devoted work of many people. As a result, I now feel much gratitude, and even a sense of awe, for the generous efforts and support of those who created Zen Center.

This new view of Zen Center comes from being involved with the creation of both IMC and IRC. The devoted, generous efforts and financial support of many, many people have made these two organizations possible. If these institutions now appear to be "established", I am very happy. We have managed to create vibrant centers where people can practice meditation, hear teachings, and have the support of community. Practice centers concentrate the goodness of many people and so become incubators for bringing forth even more goodness.

When I was a young Zen student I was dismissive of fundraising,

organization development, and building projects because I did not see them as compatible with Buddhist practice. But having witnessed how much all my Buddhist teachers, both Zen and Vipassana, were involved in such activities, I now see them as significant practices in their own right, provided we approach them with mindfulness, compassion, generosity, and non-clinging.

Because "established" practice centers benefit many people for a long time, Buddhism has long taught that their creation is one of the great sources of happiness. This has been my experience also. I had not expected to feel as much joy as I do from knowing of the many people who have contributed funds and work to create our centers. I'm also very happy that so many people have benefited from all the programs that having two centers has allowed us to offer. And I am confident that innumerable people will continue to benefit through our practice centers, well into the future.

As we embark on the project to expand IRC with the neighboring property, I am enthused by how much this will enhance our retreat center, continuing in the long tradition of building "established" Buddhist centers. I hope the next generations of practitioners and teachers will begin their practice being able to take for granted what so many of us have created.

—Gil Fronsdal

Expanding IRC: Fundraising Drive

You are invited to participate in our drive to purchase the property adjacent to IRC. It includes one forested acre with a 3-bedroom house. When this property went up for sale, an IRC supporter with a vision for the welfare of our center bought the property, with the sole purpose of holding it until we could raise the funds to buy it from him for the \$750,000 he paid.

Expanding IRC into the neighboring property is one of our most significant opportunities for establishing a firm foundation for our retreat center. Some of the benefits include:

- Incorporates more woodland, trails, and nature within IRC.
- Improved housing supports the teachers' participation at IRC.
- Allows for more resident volunteers, creating a more stable foundation for caring for the center and retreats.
- Provides space to build a community room for movement such as yoga and qi gong.
- Provides an additional well for water security.
- Protects the retreat environment from neighbor noise and activity.

Ways to Donate

By Check: Please write *Friends of IRC* in the memo and mail to:

Insight Retreat Center
108 Birch St.
Redwood City, CA 94062

Donate online: go to insightretreatcenter.org/donations and choose the green "Special Donation" section.

Questions or Gifts of Stock: please email friends@insightretreatcenter.org or call 831.440.8858

Your Questions About Practice

You are invited to send your questions relating to retreat practice to news@insightretreatcenter.org.

What is the difference between mindfulness and concentration?

Gil Fronsdal responds: Buddhism views mindfulness and concentration a little differently than how these words are often used in non-Buddhist English. Both are ways of being aware. Mindfulness knows experience objectively; concentration feels it subjectively.

The difference can be described in many ways. One way is through the verbs the Buddha associated with each. Mindfulness is associated with seeing, observing, recognizing, and monitoring. Concentration involves touching, pervading, saturating, and dwelling.

Mindfulness knows what is happening. Concentration feels what is happening. Mindfulness is more closely associated with the mind whereas concentration, especially in its initial stages, is closely associated with an awareness that rests in the body. With mindfulness we are independent of what is known; with concentration we are deeply connected and settled on the focus of our concentration.

Mindfulness is a vehicle to wisdom; concentration is a means to tranquility. We need mindfulness to help us become concentrated and we need concentration so mindfulness can see clearly. The greater our wisdom, the more we can be at ease; the greater our tranquility, the more we can be wise.

With practice, concentration and mindfulness can work together as partners where they equally contribute to a strong, peaceful, equanimous awareness that is free.

Solar Water Heater Update

We now have the funds for the Solar Water Heating system for IRC. Thank you to all who donated towards this! When a few other projects at IRC are finished we will focus on installing the water heating system on our center's roof. The system is an important part of the continuing greening of IRC.