

DEEP SPRING CENTER

FOR MEDITATION AND SPIRITUAL INQUIRY

Objects and Spaciousness

**Howell Nature Center
1005 Triangle Lake Road
Howell, MI
October 23-25, 2009**

Thank you for your registration for the upcoming meditation retreat with Barbara Brodsky, and John Orr. A place has been reserved for you.

The retreat will be held in Knoll Lodge at Howell Nature Center, which is located a short distance southwest of Brighton. We encourage car pooling due to limited parking. If you are interested, please call Deep Spring Center at (734) 477-5848. The emergency contact number during the retreat is the Howell Nature Center office number (517) 546-0249.

Knoll Lodge will be open for arrival beginning at 4:30pm on the afternoon of Friday, October 23. The retreat welcome and dinner will be at 6:00 pm. This will be the only opportunity for social interaction until breaking of the Noble Silence on Sunday afternoon. The retreat program and Noble Silence are scheduled to begin at 7:00pm on Friday. The evening program ends at about 9:30pm. The retreat will end at about 1:30pm on Sunday, October 25. Everyone will be asked to help clean up, restore furniture to initial positions, and carry retreat items out to cars. Everything must be clean, and the building vacated, by 2:30pm.

If you cannot arrive before the program begins at 7:00 pm on Friday, please keep in mind that the Noble Silence will have begun before you arrive. Please take care to enter Knoll Lodge quietly. Your room assignment will be on the diagram on the table just inside the main doors. Your retreat payment should all be paid prior to the retreat, so there is no reason to “formally” check in. Ingrid Weisz and Sandy Norton will be our retreat managers. There will be basket on the table near the coffee machines where questions can be written in a note, and Ingrid or Sandy will respond. Of course if there is an emergency, please contact them directly.

Noble Silence

What is Noble Silence? When you arrive on Friday, there will be time set aside for registration, unpacking, supper, and conversation. With the beginning of the opening talk, the retreat becomes a place of silence. Meditation students are asked not to talk, except with the teachers or with one another in appropriate ways in small group meetings. If there are cases of emergency or questions concerning the retreat schedule or process, you may talk with a retreat manager. In order to keep your concentration on the practice, it is requested that you do not read, write, or find other activities that would keep your mind busy. An exception is limited journal writing. Quieting the body and the voice also helps to quiet the mind and create a space in which you can observe the mind.

Another aspect of silence is watching our movements, endeavoring to use mindfulness as we walk, shower, open and close doors etc. so as to have minimal impact on others and the environment.

Noble Silence also fosters a sense of aloneness, even in a retreat full of people. It is important for you to resist urges to social contact by note, glance, or whisper in order to benefit most fully from this opportunity, as well as to respect the silence of others. We can learn a lot by watching the impulse to talk or make other contact and seeing what motivates that impulse. At first the thought of silence may be a bit frightening, but with more practice it will become a warm haven. The silence is broken at the end of the retreat to allow people to visit and share their experiences.

Retreat Description

This will be a silent practice weekend, interspersed with dhamma discussions focused on understanding how the many teachings of liberation fit together and support practice. Material and mental objects arise to our attention and some of them are difficult. If we fixate on them, we lose the sense of spaciousness. But we cannot hide out in the spaciousness and avoid objects that challenge us. In this retreat we will explore the relationship of objects and spaciousness and how to find balance.

Retreat Details

Everyone will need to bring all of your own bedding (sleeping bag or sheets, pillows, blankets), towels, hangers and personal toiletries. Plan to bring warm clothes and hiking shoes. You should bring a shawl or blanket to use while sitting in the meditation room in the early morning or evening. Plan to dress comfortably. Knoll Lodge is located adjacent to a large wooded area in which you can walk.

Friday dinner, three meals on Saturday plus breakfast and lunch on Sunday are included. Each person attending the retreat will be asked to participate in providing food for one meal. Cost is estimated to be about **\$20 each**. You will be contacted prior to the retreat regarding which meal group you are in, and who the other members are. Snacks, coffee, tea and bottled water will be available at all times.

Everyone will have an assigned room. There will be two or more people in each room. If you have special room requirements, please call or email me and I will do my best to accommodate your request. You will be living in relatively close quarters. Some people are allergic to incense, scented candles, scented toiletries, aftershave and perfumes. Please refrain from bringing them to the retreat. A couple of other notes: There is no smoking inside the building. Unscented candles are permitted only in the meditation room, but not in sleeping rooms.

Meditation Essentials

You should bring your own meditation cushions (if possible) or whatever you use during meditation. A few cushions will be available for you to borrow. Please note that formal meditation cushions are not necessary. A folded blanket for the floor and a firm cushion on which to sit are adequate. Some chairs are available, but you will probably be more comfortable if you bring along what you know works for you. Each day will include periods of sitting and walking meditation. Instructions will be given for those relatively new to meditation.

A community altar will be located in the meditation hall. You are welcome to bring anything you would like to have on the altar (for example, pictures or totems). Please take personal items home with you when you depart.

Work Assignments

There will be no work assignments during the retreat apart from preparing and cleaning up for your assigned meal. Help will also be appreciated unloading retreat supplies from cars on Friday evening, and packing back up on Sunday afternoon.

Dana Offering

The retreat fee covers the cost of the retreat center rental, meals, teacher accommodation and transportation, advertising and some scholarship aid. In the tradition of offering these teachings freely, The teachers receive no payment from the retreat fee. They offer themselves to the retreat on a “dana” basis. Dana is a Pali word which translated means “the spirit of generosity that is rooted in love and compassion for all beings.” Dana baskets are available during the retreat for donations for the teachers. They appreciate your support for their teachings. Since the time of Buddha this interdependency has existed between those who offer the teachings and those who receive them and the teachers feel that it is a beautiful tradition and appreciate the spirit of trust and generosity it engenders.

If you have any questions or concerns, I can be reached by phone at (734) 369-2628, by mail at my address below, or by e-mail at mug@hps.com.

I wish you an excellent retreat!

Your Registrar

Directions

From the West or East:

I-96 to Howell Exit 137. Also known as D-19/ Pinckney Road exit. Turn right from the exit ramp onto D-19 (toward Pinckney) driving 4.6 miles south to Triangle Lake Rd. Turn right. The Howell Nature Center is one (1) mile on the left.

From the North:

US 23 to M-59. Drive west on M-59 approximately nine (9) miles to Michigan Ave. (Also known as Oakgrove Rd.) Turn left at the traffic light at Michigan Ave. and M-59. Drive through downtown Howell and over I-96. Michigan Ave. is now called D-19/ Pinckney Rd. Drive 4.6 miles south to Triangle Lake Rd. Turn right. The Howell Nature Center is one (1) mile on the left.

From the South:

US 23 to I-96 west. Follow directions above from west. **OR** US 23 to M-36. Drive west 10.9 miles on M-36. Turn right at sign for Howell on D-19/Pinckney Rd. Drive five (5) miles north on D-19 to Triangle Lake Rd. Turn left. The Howell Nature Center is one (1) mile on the left.

See also

<http://www.howellnaturecenter.org/office/location/HCNC%20directions%20for%20web.pdf>