



The Art of Spiritual “Retreating” for Healers

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Making a spiritual retreat is a very good practice for self care. It is caring not only for your soul, but for your mind, emotions, and body as well. The meaning and purpose of a retreat can be different for each of us. I have been making spiritual retreats for nearly fifty years and none of my retreats have been alike or even had the same purpose. Most people think of a spiritual retreat as a time of deepening their spirituality within a particular religious context. But that is only one expression of retreating from our normal multi-tasking, depleting, hectic lives. With all our responsibilities in life, it is easy to lose one’s grounding or even our sense of identity. We carry too much “noise” inside which leads to chaos, exhaustion, and energetic depletion. Caring for your soul is hard work! It requires an investment of time and energy.

As healers, we owe it to ourselves to practice good self care and that means recouping our energy. Some believe they already do a good job of getting on the table and receiving bodywork or energy work to help settle their busy minds and bodies. Taking time to restore psychic energy is part of our commitment as healers. When that bone, deep-down tiredness overwhelms us, we need to restore vigor for our soul and body. It is curious that the Greek word for healing

(*therapeuō*) means not only to heal but also to render service to the gods and to cultivate a garden! Caring for the soul is like caring for a garden. I spend many silent hours working in my garden from spring until fall which for me is like many “mini” retreats for beauty, stillness, and restoration of my soul. But is “retreating” to a few hours of quiet time enough to restore one’s depleted energy? What does it mean for you to “retreat” from the world as a form of self care?

Solitude versus Community Experience

A retreat can be a time of solitude as you go off alone in nature or to a setting like a retreat center that sees to your physical needs while you spend the time recouping those parts of your soul that you have lost or that have become weighed down with pain, grief, and sorrow. Solitude implies a kind of silence not only of the mind and voice—but also a stillness within the heart. It is when we are truly silent that the voice of guidance has a chance to be heard. In solitude, I notice things that I had missed—colors, sounds, fragrances. These can be healing for our souls but they can also connect us to Spirit (Divine Essence) that inhabits everything. I notice that when my life is particularly chaotic, going on “retreat” takes me several days just to slow down enough to listen

