

Day of Mindfulness

Frequently Asked Questions

Open Heart Mindfulness Community is a Buddhist Sangha (community of practitioners) that come together to support one another in the practice of mindfulness in the spirit of Thich Nhat Hanh, a Zen Buddhist monk, poet, and peace activist. We study and practice teachings from Thich Nhat Hanh and other Buddhist and mindfulness teachers in an environment that fosters compassion, loving kindness, and understanding in order to nurture individuals, families, society, and a healthy planet. We offered our first Day of Mindfulness to our local community on August 9, 2014. This is one of a series of retreats and Days of Mindfulness offered by similar Sanghas, or Mindfulness Communities, throughout the upper Midwest.

Some frequently-asked questions about this one-day meditation retreat follow.

I've never meditated before. Is it OK for me to attend?

Absolutely. Thich Nhat Hanh teaches a simple form of sitting meditation in which we first center ourselves in our bodies, and then maintain our attention on the breath as we breathe in and out. When our mind wanders (as all minds do!), we gently, and without judgment, return our attention to our breath, a process we repeat over and over, as necessary. In this way, meditation is a practice that trains us to be present to what is true for us in each moment. Meditation sessions are 20-30 minutes long, spaced through the day. You can meditate on a cushion or bench (please bring your own; our number of cushions is limited) or on chairs (which are provided).

We also practice walking meditation as a group. Instructions for this simple practice will be provided at the retreat.

Besides meditating, another reason we retreat is to be together as a community. Being in community can bring us joy and is an element of the practice of “Engaged Buddhism” as taught by Thich Nhat Hanh. For both meditation and being in community, the primary “task” is to simply show up and be as fully present as possible.

I'm concerned that I won't know what to do.

No worries. An orientation is offered in the Welcome session, and we give instructions throughout the retreat for those who have not previously attended this kind of retreat.

Do I need to be a Buddhist or a member of Open Heart Mindfulness Community to attend?

No. Anybody who wants to practice Mindfulness or is curious about our form of Buddhism is warmly invited to attend. You also are warmly invited if you practice in another Buddhist or contemplative tradition. There is no expectation that you will become either a Buddhist or a member of Open Heart Mindfulness Community. Mindfulness practice can beautifully support any spiritual tradition.

Do I need to maintain silence for the entire retreat?

The wonderful and rare stillness and relaxation that we often find in retreat is deepened by our practice of what is called Noble Silence. That is, we don't speak socially. We do that so that we can deepen our practice of mindfully stilling ourselves. However, you are encouraged to make eye contact and bow and smile to other retreatants. And there is time set aside in the afternoon in which we speak mindfully during group discussion. Of course, if you have an emergency or a question, you may certainly ask one of the retreat providers.

What is the donation (dana) for?

Dana (pronounced donna) is a Sanskrit word meaning giving, offering or generosity. Dana is considered an important practice in Buddhism. It is seen as a means to, and a sign of, enlightenment. Dana is traditionally given in gratitude for the teachings received at a retreat or other event. For our Day of Mindfulness, the Richard Mauthe Center has generously offered the whole building for us. The Richard Mauthe Center for Faith, Spirituality and Social Justice provides opportunities for students, faculty, staff, and the Greater Green Bay Community to explore faith, nurture the spiritual life, and serve others. The center is a non-profit located within the UWGB campus. We want to honor the spirit of the day and also give back to the non-profit that opens their doors to us. Additionally, many people offer to provide teachings and support us during our day. Your donation supports our teachers, whose ability to continue offering teachings depends on donations from participants. Any extra proceeds will go toward materials for Open Heart Mindfulness Community. Please consider the value of this day in relation to your inner life when making your donation. Thank you.

Can I make phone calls or check my e-mail while I'm at the retreat?

The invitation is to retreat from everyday life so that we can still ourselves, so we ask that you refrain from checking your e-mail, texting or making phone calls unless it is absolutely necessary. If it is necessary, we ask that you do this away from others out of respect to their retreat and Mindfulness practices.

What is the food like at the retreat?

Please bring a vegetarian dish for our potluck lunch if you are able. This can be something you make at home or pick up at the grocery store. Those of us with dietary restrictions will greatly appreciate a note with the ingredients listed. If you're not able to bring something, come anyway – there is always plenty of food.

What else should I bring to the retreat?

In addition to comfortable, loose-fitting clothes for indoors, bring clothes and footwear that are appropriate for walking outside at this time of year. You may wish to bring your own meditation cushion and a blanket or mat for relaxation. Chairs are available. Some people like to bring a journal or notebook and pen to take notes. Your presence is the most important thing you can bring to the day.

Where is it?

The address for The Richard Mauthe Center is 2418 Leon Bond Drive, Green Bay, WI 54311. The center is located on the University of Wisconsin Green Bay campus. Signs still reference 'Ecumenical Center' instead of The Richard Mauthe Center. Look for a one story blue building next to the Kress Center. There will be a small double bell tower in front of the building, and a small circle driveway with parking in front. Overflow parking can use the small lot in the rear of the building, or the Kress Center lot. It is best to use the Nicolet entrance (South Circle Drive) if you are coming from Nicolet Drive. Follow South Circle Drive up the hill and take a left on Leon Bond Drive (fourth left). Follow Leon Bond drive past the Kress Events Center. The Richard Mauthe Center (signs say Ecumenical Center) will be on your right just past the Kress Center parking lot.