

# Home and On-Site Retreats with Shinzen Young

00:00:00 People have been writing in questions to this channel about what happens at my retreats.

00:00:15 So I'd like to talk a little bit about what you can expect if you do a retreat with me.

00:00:22 I do two kinds of retreats, actually.

00:00:26 One is an on-site type situation, which is more like the traditional way of teaching

00:00:33 for householders, where you come to a venue.

00:00:37 Often it will be a residential situation where you stay overnight, although not inevitably.

00:00:42 It might be a commuter type situation where you come in for one day or a weekend, but

00:00:48 you go home.

00:00:50 But I call those on-site retreats because I'm physically present there.

00:00:56 So I do on-site retreats around the world, mostly in North America.

00:01:03 You can find the schedule for those at the website [shinzen.org](http://shinzen.org).

00:01:07 Then I do another kind of retreat that I call the Home Practice Program.

00:01:12 That comes to you by conference call.

00:01:16 You do that from wherever you are in the world.

00:01:20 You register for those retreats by going to [basicmindfulness.org](http://basicmindfulness.org).

00:01:26 The whole program is explained there.

00:01:29 That's a really cool program because it takes away all of the showstoppers, the speed bumps

00:01:37 that people have with regards to doing the other kinds of retreats.

00:01:43 For an on-site type retreat, you need to leave your home, leave your family, incur loss of

00:01:53 job time, incur perhaps travel expenses, loss of income, and so forth in a troubled economy

00:02:02 that can be problematic.

00:02:05 Also, people don't want to be away from their families.

00:02:09 Their schedules don't allow for travel.

00:02:11 You might not be a center in their area.

00:02:14 You might be living in a part of the world where you don't have even a place you could

00:02:21 go to do something like that.

00:02:24 Or you might be disabled, you can't leave your house.

00:02:27 So we wanted to create a delivery system for what I call industrial strength but user-friendly  
00:02:38 meditation that anybody can have regardless of their familial, work, financial, or health  
00:02:46 situation or geographic situation.  
00:02:49 So that's the home practice program.  
00:02:51 You register for that and we give you an access code and a telephone number to call at the  
00:02:58 appointed time.  
00:03:00 Most of those are done in four-hour blocks.  
00:03:03 Just about anybody can get four hours during a month to do the practice.  
00:03:09 And that's a second delivery system.  
00:03:11 If you come to a residential retreat with me or a commuter retreat with me, in other  
00:03:17 words, if you do an on-site type program, you have the advantage of a buildup of momentum  
00:03:24 and so forth.  
00:03:27 If you do a home practice program, you have the advantage of enormous convenience.  
00:03:32 Sometimes people ask, well, if I go to one of his on-site retreats, will I have to practice  
00:03:43 his techniques?  
00:03:45 And the answer is absolutely no, not required.  
00:03:49 At my retreats, you are free to practice whatever form of meditation you wish.  
00:03:55 A lot of people come to my programs because they want to learn my approaches and my techniques,  
00:04:02 the so-called five-way system of basic mindfulness that I teach.  
00:04:07 And you will have a chance, of course, to learn that, but it is by no means required  
00:04:12 that you practice that, either at the retreat or for your own self-practice.  
00:04:19 It's been my experience over the years of teaching that different things work for different  
00:04:24 people at different times in their spiritual itinerary.  
00:04:29 So my basic motto about what to do, if you were to ask me, well, how should I meditate,  
00:04:36 how should I practice, I would say do what works.  
00:04:40 I'm not alone in this regard.  
00:04:42 Another senior teacher, Joseph Goldstein, wrote a book called One Dharma, and basically  
00:04:47 that's, if you had to sum it up in a soundbite, that's what the book is about.

00:04:52 And that's been my conclusion also.

00:04:54 Do what works.

00:04:56 So no, you don't have to do any of the five ways at my retreats.

00:05:01 The way I think of the organization of the practice is I have this system of five approaches,

00:05:12 and then there's everything else that anybody ever did that worked.

00:05:17 So I divide all ways of practicing into the five ways, which in some ways is just a modernization

00:05:27 of a whole bunch of old stuff, so stuff that sort of fits within that framework.

00:05:34 And then anything else that doesn't fit within that framework, I refer to them as special

00:05:40 exercises.

00:05:42 You can mix the five ways with special exercises.

00:05:46 You can mix it with whatever you want to do.

00:05:48 You're just totally free to practice as you wish.

00:05:51 So I like people that study with me as the result of having studied with me, not to become

00:06:02 a devotee of my way of teaching, but rather to see the commonality within all the ways

00:06:12 of teaching so that they can be comfortable with anybody's program.

00:06:17 They can make use of everybody's program.

00:06:19 From my perspective, there's only one teacher in the universe through all times.

00:06:29 There's just one teacher, and she is the thousand-armed, thousand-headed goddess of compassion.

00:06:38 And each one of us individual teachers sort of represents one head and a couple of arms

00:06:46 on that single archetype.

00:06:49 And if you look at the—this is Avalokiteshvara, or Kannon in Japanese, Guanyin in Chinese,

00:06:58 Guanam in Korean, and Guan Am in Vietnamese, and Chenresi in Tibetan, known by many names,

00:07:07 sometimes actually male, but often in East Asia, female.

00:07:12 So I call her the thousand-armed goddess of compassion.

00:07:16 If you look at this particular archetype, you'll see each one of her hands has a different

00:07:21 attribute, a different object, a different symbol.

00:07:26 And to me, that represents all the different approaches that different teachers have developed

00:07:31 over the ages.

00:07:33 But we're all limbs on one formless activity that pervades time and space.

00:07:41 Each one of us contributes as best we can to this overall activity.

00:07:46 So my job as a teacher is to set you up to see things that way, so that we, all of us

00:07:56 teachers, can share this huge job that needs to be done for the world.