

It's Time for a Retreat: When you need to recharge and renew

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It's a tough time to be alive. There's so much crap in the world swirling around us that even the most grounded and together people I know are struggling. We can't run away from problems, but we can take a break – giving ourselves a respite where we can recharge and renew. It's time for a Retreat, where we (temporarily) withdraw from the world, take good care of ourselves and find more peace and satisfaction in our lives.

I have been on many retreats in my 68 years; today I'd like to tell you about three kinds of retreats. I start with the easiest to experience (because it's free and you do it at home), then I'll say a bit about meditative retreats, and end with the most luxurious kind of retreats.

The At-Home Retreat. It's free, easy and you only need some uninterrupted time to be alone (or to share it with a special someone). It can be a morning or a weekend, but let it be – at minimum – at least half a day. You'll need that long to begin to detach from the demands of the outside world.

Set up your retreat however you like, but give it some kind of structure. Otherwise, it's too easy to just give up when you get distracted. Create a schedule and write it down. Then, follow it! Don't be too ambitious, that's a set-up for failure. Start modest: you can always have another, more challenging retreat next time.

Set an intention: you want to have a purpose for your retreat, for example, "I want to heal from my bad breakup" or "I want to feel calmer". Eliminate distractions: turn your phone off and stay away from any electronic devices. Here are some other ideas on creating an at-home

retreat: <https://www.calmmoment.com/wellbeing/how-to-have-your-own-diy-wellness-retreat-at-home/>

The Meditative Retreat: You might want to spend a day or two away from home, maybe at the beach, woods, desert or mountains. You could spend the day in some beautiful outdoor place, walking for most of the day (hopefully away from people) and drive home at dusk. Or, you could rent a cabin somewhere nearby (Idyllwild is great for this) or even go for a 3, 5, 7 or even 10-day retreat to a retreat center like Spirit Rock, in Northern California.

I have been on several week-long silent meditation retreats: not talking brings up a lot of mental and emotional stuff that we are normally too distracted to notice. It's not so easy to "be in the present": it sounds so simple, but I've noticed how much I tend to plan the future or worry about the past when I go on a silent retreat.

A retreat center like Spirit Rock offers you support and structure to handle the challenges of silence and meditation, and Spirit Rock offers retreats specifically for the LGBTQ community: <https://www.spiritrock.org>

The Luxury Retreat: When you want to be *really* good to yourself, it's great to go to a place where you are pampered and taken care of, can eat wonderful food, explore beautiful places (mountains, forests, hiking paths) and have kind people encourage you

to develop your mind/body/spirit. I have had wonderful experiences at Rancho La Puerta, a luxury retreat center and fitness spa just across the border in Tecate, Mexico. At “The Ranch”, your mind can be stimulated by lectures and workshops given by famous authors, your body can be happy with every sort of exercise imaginable, from Feldenkrais to Aerial Yoga, and your spirit nurtured with many varieties of chanting, sound healing and meditation (sitting and hiking).

Everything here is optional: you choose the kind of retreat you want and there are plenty of knowledgeable staff to help you create it. Rancho La Puerta is very LGBTQ-friendly: I’ve met lots of LGBTQ guests and staff on my visits here. If you’ve never given yourself a gift like this, there’s no time like the present: <https://rancholapuerta.com>.

Regardless of the type of retreat you choose, turn off the outside world for a while and find some peace and quiet in these difficult times. You deserve it.