

Why Retreats?

Just last weekend I was privileged to lead a Gemmotherapy practitioner retreat in Leyden MA. I made a conscious decision to arrive early in order to spend 36 hours in silence. Not only was this a gift to myself but also to those attending as I had, "fully arrived," before diving in to their schedule. We had a grace filled three days together and as an introvert I certainly give credit to my days of silence for my ability to stay present.

There was certainly a time in my life in which the idea of a silent retreat would have sent me into panic. Trust me, the last thing I wanted to do was be still and hear my inner dialogue. Today it's a different story. Quite frankly, I can't get enough. While I previously considered retreats to be an, "escape," from life, now I see them as exactly the opposite. A retreat is a time for tuning in, not tuning out. It provides the opportunity to quiet the noise of our busy-ness, and connect to what is really happening and what you really are feeling. Here's some good information on the benefits of silence.

I used the word privileged to begin this post and without a doubt this word is used appropriately. I fully recognize all that is entailed to make a retreat, given family obligations and financial restrictions. I do feel privileged that I am at an age and comfort level in life that I can partake in such a rich experience. The truth however, is that one doesn't have to fly off to a spiritual setting or book into a center to make a retreat. Mini retreats can be created right where you are by carving time out of your ordinary, everyday life. It's all about perspective.

A retreat to a new mother may be 30 minutes of sitting in silence with her cup of tea. To those in the 9-5+ world it may be stepping outside for a 15 minute mindful walk in a nearby

park. You can even create your own full day retreat by heading out to state park on your own or unplugging from your phone and laptop for a 24 hour period and reacquaint yourself with the art of “being” rather than “doing”. If my ideas are not detailed enough to inspire you, The Chopra Center blog offers this plan for creating your very own DIY retreat. May this serve as a personal invitation to bring some retreat time into your life. Set an appointment with yourself and make it happen. Start small, dream big.