

HOME YOGA RETREAT

A How To Guide

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Retreat –
to move back or
withdraw...
to a quiet or
secluded place

A delicious yoga retreat, so many of us have that on our bucket list, for various reasons. And for various reasons, it may not have happened, yet or this year's one. Too expensive, dates don't fit, friend not free, no time off work, or if you haven't tried it before, you want to wait till you are fit/flexible enough or if our esteem doesn't feel fit enough, perhaps we don't deserve such an indulgence?

In my case, the first four reasons played tag team since Jan 1 2020... and then the self-iso restrictions due to COVID-19 hit in March. I started to feel stretched thin as the 'vid introduced or exacerbated challenges on our projects. Sole parenting. Homeschooling, a 5 year old, need I say more?! As I thought about how many cups full of zen I would need to cope with the sugar high during easter weekend, I felt tense. Cue locking in the home yoga retreat.

I decided to give myself a couple of days annual leave off work and started planning, just so I wouldn't waste my precious days. (I timed it with my little one being scheduled to be at her dads) Having been on several retreats before, the first thing I drew up was a schedule. And then I promptly called a friend, because I felt like this would be my last call, last human touch for 3 days. She very compassionately told me this would be a terrible time for digital detox (the evolving news & restrictions on COVID to keep up with and keep a channel open for others to check in on me.) She asked me, what was my aim anyway?

This got me thinking about having very clear intentions during your home retreat. I'll outline some aspects here so you can use these intentions to put yourself on autopilot and have a better chance at "success" with the retreat.

OBJECTIVE

Why are you doing this? To get stronger? Flexible? To escape some stressor? To study – a text? The self? To eat nourishingly for a few days?

In my case I knew I had been running very fast & hard with numerous physical & mental stresses for 6 months. Your nervous system can be in a "fight or flight" state (sympathetic response) or "rest and rejuvenate" state (parasympathetic response).

My nervous system was fried from being in a high sympathetic state for over 6 months even through the Christmas break. I didn't remember what the parasympathetic felt like anymore. I just wanted a flavour of it again and step my nervous system more habitually into that rest and relax state again.





SCHEDULED or GO-WITH-THE-FLOW

How strict do you want/need the schedule to be? For physical fitness, you probably need a timed schedule. For creativity, possibly more flexibility. In my case, to relax, my mornings didn't have an alarm clock. I "felt" my time through the day. This allowed me sleep, which was vital in the goals I had. I minimised what I needed "to do" as a checklist, & allowed myself free rein on the rest of my time so I could just "be".

a. Creativity – have you allowed time in your schedule to create/write/garden/paint/knit/cook, however you wish to feel creative?

b. Study – you may wish to learn something new in this time as part of betterment, have you allowed ample breaks & got all the resources to allow this?

ACTIVITY LEVEL

How intense a practice do you intend? Will you do additional activities like bushwalking? Allow recovery in the day & try to do the intense things by 4pm. If you are going from whoa to go, gradually build up the intensity levels to keep up motivation. I varied up my intensity level all 3 days based on my energy level.

CONNECTEDNESS LEVEL

Will you digitally declutter or keep connected with news, friends, social media etc? Is this even a source of stress or actually a support? I did stay connected to friends but not the news.

DIETARY RESTRICTIONS LEVEL

Have a plan of what you want to eat and shop in advance, and have a menu. Perhaps partially prep the meals to reduce this "errand". I ate dinners with miso broth – very warm and hearty, filling, and easy to digest.

INDULGENCE LEVEL

Have you been lacking time to indulge in a bath, a home facial, a movie, music, a novel? I did all of the above!!

Other points – preparation – declutter so you don't feel tempted to vacuum or fold clothes during the retreat. If possible, clear all errands (do the laundry before or after your retreat, after all you wouldn't go to a retreat to do laundry) During the retreat, be mindful if any of these urges irritate you. Just "Be" with these feelings. The housework will loyally be waiting for you at the end of the retreat & won't be mad you delayed it a few days.

Sample schedule – use it as a guide to plan your own personalised schedule

7.00	Ablutions & drink warm water – 15 min Yoga movement - 1 hr Meditation – 15 minutes Journalling – 15 minutes Shower & self massage while moisturising with indulgent lotion/oil – 30+ mins Leisurely breakfast – 30+ mins
10.30	Morning "Activity" e.g. read, draw, dance, or just sit and gaze at the garden
12.30	Leisurely Lunch
2.00	Afternoon Activity e.g. sunbake in the yard, tarot cards, cloud gaze, nap
4.00	Self Care e.g. bath, face mask
6.00	Dinner
7.30	Yin practice or Nidra
9.30	Bedtime with aromatherapy

HOW DID I GO?

Day 1 – I was really good following the “plan”, did a vigorous physical yoga practice, journalled prolifically at various points in the day as I emptied my mind, I read loads - both fiction and some yogic studies, and in the evening I took a long soak in the bathtub followed by a yoga nidra meditation.

Day 2 – I “slept in”! I did the same morning routine, albeit 90 mins later. In the afternoon I fell asleep reading and napped more. In the evening I did tarot cards and a shorter yin practice. I felt extremely drowsy this day.



Day 3 – I was back to energetic me. I practiced yoga in the sun. I studied more deeply, and my fun time was watching a French movie that afternoon!

I felt so amazing and calm at the end of the 3 days, I definitely met my objective of kicking into the parasympathetic nervous system. And the effects have stuck a month later. Definitely a great couple of days investing in myself.

This guide and the videos on this site will help you form the basis of your retreat. The day before, get your bath salts, face

mask, books, whatever makes you zing with happiness, collect it in readiness for your retreat.

Namaste and good luck with your retreat objective. Do share your experience with us hello@theomovement.com.au

Note: this article has not considered when either more than one person in the household retreats together, or if only one is retreating & others are not. There may be other considerations under these circumstances.

For example, during iso times, you may wish to ask your partner to care for young kids for perhaps 5-6 (yes, I just said that!) hours for a few days in a row to allow this indulgence, you may temporarily need to return to the real world each day. A few hours of silence for yourself would be appropriate if you have people around, in my circumstance it was forced. A few days in a row is best to build momentum in these new practices & layer upon the de-stressing of the nervous system.