

# **Silent Retreat**

**November 26th – December 2nd  
2022**

**Schedule:**

Sunday Evening: 3pm-10pm

Monday - Friday: 8am-10pm

Saturday: 8am-12pm (lunch 12-1 provided but not required)

**Location:**

Art of Living Retreat Center

639 Whispering Hills Rd

Boone, NC 28607

## WELCOME

Thank you for committing to this investigation of your deepest nature—that unnamable “something” that has been stirring inside. I have no doubt that you will find this experience transformative and worth the time commitment and effort. Your commitment not only benefits you but reflects and amplifies the commitment of your fellow attendees and deepens their experience profoundly. It is my hope that every person attending this retreat is serious about waking up to and embodying their innermost truth. You are in good company and will be in a supportive environment both practically and energetically.

This time is for you. It is a time to leave all other commitments aside and address the innermost promptings of your heart. This is a time to investigate that part of yourself that has been calling for a long time but has not been given the context in “life as usual” to come to fully to fruition. In short you will be surrounded by others just like you who have been carrying this question around for a very long time. This is not the type of question that needs an answer, not in the usual sense. It is a question that points to a possibility. It points to something profoundly mysterious, yet too close to talk about. It points to something unimaginably powerful, yet always at rest. It points to complete absorption into vivid transient aliveness and it also points to a radical freedom and spontaneity which never holds on or second guesses itself. Let us investigate together.

## COMMITMENT

This is primarily a heart-level commitment. First and foremost, I ask that you honor that commitment to yourself and others during all portions of the retreat you attend. Whether it is obvious or not your presence and sustained commitment helps those around you in many ways.

During this type of retreat there is a group meditative concentration that builds day by day. The stillness gets physically palpable over time. Anyone who has experienced this knows exactly what I mean. It can be an exponential deepening toward the last couple of days. Awakenings and dramatic transformations can and do happen at any time but what is quite possible on day four or five is far less likely on day one.

Please be mindful to minimize disruptions during quiet meditation such as shifting, moving around etc. Often we notice some restlessness as we begin to meditate but if we don't make a problem of it, we begin to deeply enjoy the stillness and quietude that we cultivate as a group. Please arrive on time to start the round of meditation per the schedule and be in your preferred seated position by the time the bell rings.

## SILENCE

This is a silent retreat. We will observe silence throughout the day with the exception of talks, guided meditations, and Q&A sessions. Art of Living staff are used to silent retreats and will know we are observing silence throughout the day. They know how to manage the meal times in a silent fashion as well.

Please understand that there is no need or responsibility to communicate with (including non-verbally), make eye contact with, or otherwise interact with others during the retreat. This includes touching, hugging etc. You might even see someone in emotional distress and feel compelled to offer comfort. In this case please give them the gift of allowing them to face their own experience sincerely, authentically, and without distraction. Strategies to work with intense emotions and psychological experiences that inevitably arise during retreat will be addressed in talks given throughout the day.

If any experience becomes truly overwhelming I am always here to work with you. However, I ask that you check in with yourself first and see if this is not something that might be intelligently handled by “doing nothing.” By this I mean simply staying with and honoring the wisdom of the experience itself and seeing what is revealed. When things get particularly intense, it can be helpful to remind yourself that everything is transitory. All experiences pass, whether pleasant or unpleasant. I’ve seen and experienced things I cannot even begin to describe in these settings. The one thing I can say with certainty that was common to all those experiences is that they went away. If something still feels overwhelming or you feel particularly compelled to discuss it with me, consider the possibility (likelihood) that others are going through something similar and might benefit from hearing your concern discussed in group Q&A. This is also a great time to address any practice issues, emotional challenges, psychological or mystical experiences etc.

## SILENT SITTING (MEDITATION)

You are not required to attend all meditation rounds but are strongly encouraged to attend as many as possible. Adopting a policy of “sitting even when I don’t particularly feel like it” can pay huge dividends. Regardless of how much you do or don’t meditate you will have very pleasant as well as unpleasant experiences. This is just part of the package when it comes to retreat. The good news is that having an unpleasant experience does not preclude awakening. Indeed, some of the most profound awakenings I’ve witnessed have come directly out of some very uncomfortable inner states.

If you begin a round of meditation, please do your best to complete it. If you do have to leave, please do so quietly and unobtrusively and wait until the next break to return. This is so that we honor the silence that is culminated in the meditation hall during silent sitting rounds. Any sitting posture or arrangement is allowed including using a chair, cushion or

backjack. We simply ask that once you choose a position for a specific round try to remain in that position throughout the round. Minimize obtrusive noises during silent sitting rounds such as shuffling, repositioning, drinking from water bottles, unnecessary throat clearing etc. The shared silence can be profoundly transformative if we honor it as a group. The ten-minute breaks between rounds of meditation are ideal times for “walking meditation,” stretching or slow exploration of movement while maintaining your meditative focus.

We will all begin the retreat together at 3 pm on Sunday.

## LOGISTICS

Please take a look at the Travel page on the Art of Living website to plan your travel:

<https://artoflivingretreatcenter.org/retreat-center/directions-v2/>

\* Please note there is no alcohol, illicit drugs, or tobacco allowed at the retreat center.

### **Arrival and Check-in:**

Please arrive in time to attend the opening talk and retreat introduction at 3 pm on Sunday. Afterward you will have plenty of time to check in (if you hadn't earlier), and get settled before dinner at 6 pm. If you arrive earlier in the day you may be able to check in if your room is ready, if not you will be able to store your bag with the front desk you can explore and get yourself acquainted with the area. After dinner we will begin with a guided mediation round which will begin our first silent portion of the retreat.

### **Seating:**

Art of Living will provide chairs for all participants. If you use a seat cushion, floor cushion, backjack etc., please bring these with you. There will be floor space available.

## MEALS

Art of Living will provide three meals per day, which includes dinner on the first day, and breakfast and lunch on the last day. Meals are all vegetarian and can accommodate dietary restrictions.

## FREE TIME

You are welcome to use your free time as you choose. I recommend sitting, resting, or walking in silence. I strongly encourage you to avoid electronic devices during the silent portions of the retreat, and check them later during the non-silent portions.

## POETRY ROUND

There is a daily sitting round that includes poetry reading. Anyone who wants to read something can do so. It can be something you wrote (short prose or poetry), a poem, song lyrics that move you etc. Between readings we will sit silently. You can bring your phone to this portion to read from but please put it on silence.

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

This is your opportunity to ask any practice related questions. It is very helpful to do this in a group setting as its quite common that different people have the same questions or sticking points.

## Sunday Schedule

3:00-4:00	Retreat Introduction and Opening talk
4:00-6:00	Free Time to Check in and Get Settled
6:00-7:00	Dinner
7:00-7:20	Orientation to Center by AOL Staff (mandatory)
7:30-8:00	Guided Meditation (Silence Observed)
8:10-8:40	Silent Sitting
8:50-9:20	Singing Bowls
9:30-10:00	Silent Sitting (Maintain Silence)

## Daily Schedule (Monday – Friday)

7:30-8:50	Breakfast
9:00-9:40	Guided Meditation
9:50-10:20	Silent Sitting
10:30-11:20	Talk
11:30-11:50	Silent Sitting
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-3:00	Free Time
3:00-3:30	Silent Sitting
3:40-4:20	Poetry Reading/Silent Sitting
4:30-6:00	Q&A
6:00-8:00	Dinner and Free Time
8:00-8:50	Singing Bowls
9:00-9:30	Silent Sitting
9:40-10:00	Silent Sitting (Maintain Silence)

2:30-3:30      Breakout Small Group Discussion Q&A. You will be assigned *one* day Mon-Fri to do this with a facilitator. Be sure you know which day is your day and the location of the breakout room. All other days just follow the main schedule.

## Saturday Schedule

7:30-8:50	Breakfast (Maintain Silence)
9:00-9:40	Guided Meditation
9:50-10:20	Silent Sitting (End Silence)
10:30-11:20	Free Time (Checkout)
11:30-11:50	Closing Comments
12:00-1:00	Lunch