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What is vipassana retreat

Naturopathic Doctor & Nurse PractitionerBy Erica Matluck, N.D., N.P.Naturopathic Doctor & Nurse PractitionerErica Matluck, N.D., N.P. is an NYC-based naturopathic doctor, nurse practitioner, and holistic coach.Image by Addictive Creatives / StocksyHealing requires that we get the mind into the present moment. This is why meditation is such a profound therapeutic tool. If you don't agree, I encourage you to drop what you're doing and sign up for a Vipassana course.Vipassana is a 10-day silent meditation retreat—and there is nothing like 10 days of silence to show you the nature of your own mind. Vipassana means "to see things as they really are," and that is exactly what I experienced in the course. Vipassana meditation reveals the ways in which we create our suffering, and once this is understood, we can begin to free ourselves from that suffering. Sign up for our FREE doctor-approved gut health guide featuring shopping lists, recipes, and tipsThis ad is displayed using third party content and we do not control its accessibility features.Set yourself up for success with a good night's sleep.Vipassana is an ancient tradition that extends all the way back to Buddha. The teachings have been passed down through many generations, and in 1969, S.N. Goenka began teaching Vipassana in India. Goenka taught this meditation technique to hundreds of thousands of people all over the world before he took his last breath at 89 years old. Although he passed in 2013, he continues to be an integral part of the Vipassana course because they play videos of him teaching every night of the 10-day retreat. Vipassana courses are donation-based, residential experiences where participants learn the technique in the traditional form and practice it thoroughly.Attending a Vipassana course requires discipline and commitment. Participants are asked to refrain from killing, stealing, any sexual activity, dishonesty, and intoxicating substances. The purpose of this code of conduct is to quiet the mind so participants can experience the benefits of the technique. Vipassana students are required to engage in this meditation technique only during the course—so experienced meditators from other traditions are required to check their existing practice at the door (along with all electronics, books, and writing utensils). In addition, all forms of prayer, worship, healing techniques, spiritual practices, and religious ceremonies must be suspended for the duration of the course.This ad is displayed using third party content and we do not control its accessibility features.During the 10-day course, students must observe noble silence (no speaking, no eye contact, no body language, no written notes or any communication at all). If it is necessary, students may speak with the teacher or management, but this is discouraged unless absolutely needed and should be minimized. Physical contact is not permitted at all, and the male and female spaces are separated. Women are required to remain in the spaces designated for women and men in the spaces designated for men. Yoga and physical exercise (with the exception of walking in designated areas), reading, writing, and music are not permitted either. The daily schedule on Vipassana retreat is pretty simple. You wake up at 4 a.m. Meditate. Breakfast. Meditate. Meditate. Lunch. Rest. Meditate. Meditate. Meditate. Tea break. Meditate. Teacher's discourse (this is where they show videos of Goenka teaching). Meditate. Go to sleep at 9:30 p.m. The meditation sits range from one to two hours. Some of them are called "sits of determination," and students are asked to practice the technique without moving the body at all for the duration of the meditation. The longer meditations are not "sits of determination" so if bodily needs arise in these practices, it's OK to tend to them. Breakfast, lunch, and afternoon tea are served daily. The meals are simple and vegetarian. Fasting is not allowed. Modest, comfortable clothing suitable for long hours of seated meditation is encouraged, and tight, transparent, revealing clothing that could distract other students is not permitted. Students are not allowed to consume any intoxicating substances during the course—and this includes sedative medications and tobacco products.As you can see, there are a lot of rules in Vipassana—and that's probably one of the reasons it's so effective!This ad is displayed using third party content and we do not control its accessibility features.Technique is integral in Vipassana meditation. Vipassana is a practice of self-observation, and the technique helps you to cultivate a sense of equanimity. It is understood that the root of all suffering is the desire for pleasure and the avoidance of pain. As you learn to cultivate equanimity through this technique, you free yourself from the cycle of craving and aversion.Vipassana is not actually taught until the fourth day of the retreat. The first three days are about mastering the mind by observing the dynamic nature of reality through the breath. Everything is always changing, including the breath, so the technique practiced on Days 1 to 3 is one where you focus all of your attention on the area just below the nostrils and concentrate on the breath as it graces this one spot just above the upper lip. After three days of this, the mind is calm and students are taught Vipassana. Vipassana meditation is the practice of observing the subtle sensations throughout the body without reacting to them. You scan the body with your attention, noticing the sensations arise and simply watch them. If a sensation is pleasurable, you observe it and let it pass. If it's uncomfortable, you observe it and watch it pass. Neither is superior, and both are impermanent.If you can cultivate this understanding in meditation, you can apply it to your whole life. Vipassana is taught to be shared with all beings everywhere, so on the final day of the course, a lovingkindness meditation is shared.I attended my first Vipassana in 2018, and it was life-changing. I had many insights, but there were a few moments that permanently shifted my life.This ad is displayed using third party content and we do not control its accessibility features.On the third day of the course, I found myself being very critical of the Vipassana structure and the technique, and I had made up my mind that Vipassana was not for me. That evening in meditation, in a deep state of self-observation, I saw how I had prematurely judged the course. We hadn't even learned the Vipassana technique yet, and I had already made up my mind about the 10-day experience. I realized how often I had been doing this in my life and how it prevented me from fully experiencing life. I let go of my judgments and found a deeper sense of presence than I had ever experienced. It has remained with me.A few days later, I thought about a past conversation I'd had with my partner (whom I had not spoken to in over five days). As I replayed the conversation in my head (which happens a lot in 10 days of silence), I became frustrated and angry with him. I wanted to call him and tell him how upset I was, but, of course, I couldn't because I was in noble silence and checked my phone at the door.My mind was spinning, and my emotions building, and then all of a sudden, I saw myself. I saw how I created my own suffering with my thoughts. When I entered Vipassana days earlier, I was not upset with my partner. This conversation happened weeks ago. Nothing had changed except my thoughts. I saw how my thoughts affect my feelings and my feelings drive my (re)actions. I saw how my mind had left the present moment, time-traveled to the past, yet created my current state.And if this was happening on a solo silent retreat, this must've been happening everywhere in my life. This woke me up deeply, and nothing has ever been the same. This ad is displayed using third party content and we do not control its accessibility features.When you sign up for a Vipassana retreat, you are committing to 10 days of silent meditation. You cannot read, write, speak, use technology, or exercise during Vipassana, and it's a time of deep quiet and contemplation. While this practice is not easy, it can teach participants incredibly valuable lessons about thought, emotion, and the human experience.Sign up for our FREE doctor-approved gut health guide featuring shopping lists, recipes, and tipsSign up for our FREE doctor-approved gut health guide featuring shopping lists, recipes, and tipsErica Matluck, N.D., N.P.Naturopathic Doctor & Nurse PractitionerErica Matluck, N.D., N.P. is an NYC-based naturopathic doctor, nurse practitioner, and holistic coach. She was trained as a Reiki master at 20 years old and began studying yoga as a teenager. She obtained her master's in nursing from Seattle University and doctorate of naturopathic medicine from Bastyr University. Eastern philosophy threads through all of Matluck's work. Combining over a decade of experience working in conventional and alternative medicine, she brings a truly holistic lens to medicine, addressing the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual obstacles to health.Prior to opening a private practice in New York City, Matluck spent eight years at One Medical Group and has delivered onsite wellness workshops at countless prominent companies. She is also the founder of Seven Senses, where she leads transformational wellness experiences throughout the world.About usContactWrite for usJobsAdvertiseBecome an AffiliateCollectiveTerms of SaleDisclaimerPrivacyData Collection

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