

Preparations for the Dark Room Retreat

Our mindset and attitudes upon entering a Dark Room retreat will help set the stage for our immersion into darkness. It would be wonderful to enter with a sense of clarity, openness, joy, and of resting in our true nature, but this is more the fruit of the retreat than a prerequisite. Nevertheless, some of the attitudes that can help set the stage include:

1. Looking forward to a wonderful rest and vacation from the pressures of everyday life.
2. Curiosity about what will arise.
3. Longing for the clarity, wisdom and fruits of the practices of the retreat.
4. Dedication to growth.
5. Treating whatever arises as an opportunity to learn.
6. Connecting to your teachers and the teachings.
7. A sense of support from the community.
8. Service to the larger community and the world and wishing to be a beneficial presence.
9. Confidence stemming from the fact that others have successfully navigated through such retreats for thousands of years and have returned with immense treasures through their commitment and efforts. Gratitude for this opportunity to learn, to grow, and to create benefit and beauty for oneself, others, and the World.

Inner Preparations - Practice at Home

1. Each participant should practice the Cosmic Inner Smile, Six Healing Sounds, Fusion of the Five Elements, Microcosmic Orbit, Iron Shirt Chi Kung and Tao Yin, which bring the body into a state of balance and tuning. A physically fit vehicle is the foundation stone from which to launch astral travel into multi-dimensional orbits and higher cortical activity.
2. All participants are encouraged to engage in a healthy preparatory diet and bowel cleansing process, commencing 4 weeks before the retreat. Diet should be rich in Vitamin D, beta-carotene like cholerics, calcium (2,000 gm), magnesium (500 mg) and zinc (20 mg/day).
3. We suggest that participants increase their daily intake of seaweed and blue green algae approximately four weeks before the retreat. Bring a sufficient supply of vitamins, seaweed and blue green algae along with you. This will enable essential amino acids and enzymes required by the body and third eye, to produce the all-important neurotransmitters of the 'Internal Alchemical Elixir'.
4. Participants should endeavor to disperse all emotional troubles with friends and family members, prior to the retreat.

Outer Preparations - Practical Advice

1. We recommend that you arrive at Tao Garden several days before the retreat, to settle yourself, continue the purification process, and to become accustomed to the physical environment and retreat layout. This will facilitate your day-to-day life in complete darkness.
2. It is imperative to leave any light-emitting device outside of the Dark Room retreat. The eyes and our perception will become extremely sensitive to the least bit of illumination; even the faintest leakages of light, such as a watch dial or LED, will disturb the environment. Therefore, please do not bring: illuminated clocks and watches, flashlights, flash cameras, palm pilots, cell phones, etc.
3. Make sure that all clothing and personal items that you will need for the period of the retreat are in order. Create a way of laying out the different items so that you can easily determine what you are selecting. Organization and order can make everyday functioning much easier.
4. Bring eye-shades with you to Tao Garden, such as the blind-folds that you might wear during travel to help sleep. The eye-shades will be worn during the retreat to soften the eyes and remind the eyes that they are unnecessary in the Dark Room, breathing their habitual pattern of use.
5. Medications and vitamins require special care. It may be helpful to contain daily doses in separate vials, medication boxes, or plastic zip-lock bags. A multi-vitamin supplement is useful, and special supplements of vitamin D are particularly important to make up for the lack of exposure to sunlight.
6. It is important to take care of any personal business before entering the retreat, such as letters, phone calls, etc., and to plan on total isolation from the outside world for the duration of the retreat.
7. Bring sunglasses and eye-shades with you to Tao Garden. The 7th, 14th and 21st evenings are opportunities to terminate the Dark Room Retreat. You will leave through a reflexive tunnel, wearing sunglasses to readjust to the light.

Benefits of the Dark Room Experience

The experiences of each person will vary depending on their stage of spiritual development and maturity. At the same time, most people, even beginners, will receive great benefits, which may include:

1. Relaxation. This is one of the foundations for all other work. During the early days of the retreat, catching up on sleep, allowing the eyes to recuperate from the over-stimulation of our visual world, releasing the grip of mental concerns, plans, and agendas, and simply letting the energies settle creates the best vacation you may ever have.
2. Once relaxed and feeling at home in the dark, the Inner Lights may appear as well as possible images of space teachers, deities, colours, and shapes. Imbalances in one's energies can manifest as dull colors.
3. Over time, as one becomes more open, balanced and awake, images clear as day may appear, not inside the mind's eye but outside in the space of the retreat.
4. Advanced practitioners may experience some of the following: Dreams and sleep become more lucid. A state of continuous consciousness arises in which there is no break in conscious awareness; meditation can continue during sleeping and non-sleeping hours.
5. The Taoist Secret of Love and the Healing Love become very active, so that working with sexual energies and engaging in creative work become easier and more powerful.
6. Dreams will often take the form of teachings or participation in great mythological stories.

Dark Room Nutrition

Food is specially prepared to meet the requirements of the body, mind, and spirit in attaining the goals of dark room enlightenment. Fresh juices and soups are served for "breakfast" and a light organic meal is prepared for the afternoon. The diet consists of simple, often liquid foods. Seaweed and blue green algae meet many of the general dietary requirements, supplying high concentrations of the eight essential amino acids required by the body (see below). Fresh juices, especially from the noni (Morinda) fruit, supply the metabolic enzymes necessary for developing the neuro-endocrine system to its highest potential.

Sufficient levels of tryptophan are especially important for the Dark Room experience. Tryptophan is one of 20 amino acids, which are the basic building blocks of proteins. It is one of the eight "essential" amino acids, meaning it cannot be synthesized by the body from other amino acids, and must therefore be ingested in foods. Adults need from 3.5 mg/kg/day to 350-500 mg of tryptophan per day. (http://www.pallidotomy.com/diet_nutrition.html, <http://nutrition.about.com/library/blaatryptophan.htm>.)

As tryptophan crosses the blood-brain barrier, it is converted to serotonin with the assistance of vitamins B6, B12 and folate. Tryptophan is also converted in the body to niacin (vitamin B-3) and picolinic acid. Giving high doses of vitamin B-6 along with tryptophan increases its conversion to niacin and decreases its uptake into the nervous system. Low blood tryptophan levels have been reported in depressed patients and are corrected with tryptophan supplementation. Tryptophan is better absorbed in the brain when consumed as part of a high carbohydrate meal.

Some of the tryptophan-rich foods available at Tao Garden, and recommended for the Dark Room retreat, are listed below, along with several other tryptophan-rich foods.

Tryptophan-Rich Foods at Tao Garden

- Seaweed, blue-green algae
- Tofu, soy milk, soy yogurt, soy beans
- Brown rice
- Bananas, dates, figs
- Peanuts
- Watermelon seeds
- Fish and other seafoods
- Chicken

Other Tryptophan-Rich Foods

- Cottage cheese
- Milk and milk products
- Malt
- Legumes
- Almonds, soy nuts
- Brewer's yeast
- Animal protein: beef, turkey ...

Levels of tryptophan in some common foods:

- Fish & other seafoods 800-1,300 mg/lb
 - Meats 1,000-1,300 mg/lb
 - Poultry 600-1,200 mg/lb
 - Peanuts, roasted w skin 800 mg/lb
 - Sesame seeds 700 mg/lb
 - Dry, whole lentils 450 mg/lb
- (http://www.springboard4health.com/notebook/proteins_ tryptophan.html)

Accessory Vitamins

B6 (pyridoxene); Sources: Meats, **fish, green leafy vegetables**, legumes, **bananas, whole grains** (<http://nutrition.about.com/library/blvitb6.htm>).

B12 (Cobalamin); Found almost exclusively in animal products (meats, **fish, poultry, milk, eggs**, yeast, cheese) (<http://nutrition.about.com/library/blvitb12.htm>).

Some References on Tryptophan:

<http://nutrition.about.com/library/weekly/aa112100a.htm>,

www.springboard4health.com/notebook/proteins_tryptophan.html

http://www.pallidotomy.com/diet_nutrition.html

Blue Green Algae

Algae are the fundamental basis of the entire food chain - the foundational nutrient source for creating and renewing all life on earth. Blue green algae are the cr?me de la cr?me of all algae, one of the planet's most powerful foods. This single-celled organism (actually a bacterium) is richly endowed with a vast array of easily assimilated nutrients including essential fatty acids, active enzymes, vitamins, amino acids, minerals, proteins, complex sugars, and phytonutrients.

Blue green algae have an amino acid profile that is nearly in exact proportion to the requirements of the human body. It contains over 60 minerals and trace minerals in naturally chelated form so the body can absorb them into the cells. With the exception of vitamins D and K, all vitamins are present to provide fuel for our cells (Vitamin D and K are produced naturally by our body). Blue green algae contain the Essential Fatty Acids (EFA) Omega-3 and Omega-6, and are one of the highest known natural food sources of beta carotene (a cell regenerator and potent neutralizer of free radicals) and chlorophyll (excellent chelating ability to escort toxins out of the body). The food is also 97% assimilable, digestible and useable by the body.

Spirulina, a spiraled blue green alga, is one of the most common nutritional varieties of blue green algae. A spirulina factory is located in Lampang, southeast of Chiang Mai (see www.spirulina.co.th).

Some references and sources:

<http://www.adhdoutreach.com/nutrition.htm>

<http://www.celltech.com>

http://wholefoodsuppliments.com/alpha_blue_green_algae.htm

<http://www.spirulina.co.th>