



Institute for Jewish Spirituality

Being With What Is: Guidance for Practicing in a Time of War

Practicing in a time of war

We come together in a time shaped by the 10/7 attack and its aftermath. Each of us has a different experience and different relationships and proximity to the war and its violence and its victims. We may be shaken, fearful for our own safety and that of others, activated and (re-)traumatized. Some of our most cherished relationships may be strained or even broken.

War and violence are extreme experiences of unsafety that activate our natural reactions to close our hearts, protect ourselves and our loved ones, and often to other, dehumanize, or demonize those who are positioned differently. Our practice at this retreat will be both to notice this closing and othering when it arises, and to cultivate openness of the heart.

Coming together in a Jewish space to practice can be a deep source of care for ourselves and each other in this time. At the same time, we may also be carrying assumptions and expectations about what participants in a Jewish meditation retreat share in common, and we may feel upset when our assumptions don't hold. To support everyone in our practice of softening and opening our hearts, and looking deeply at what is arising, we are offering these shared understandings and boundaries, and asking that all participants agree to them:

Accepting our diversity

I understand that each of us has our own experience, relationships to Israelis and Palestinians, responses to the war, and beliefs about how peace, safety, and justice may be supported in the region. I will not assume that any of my beliefs or experiences are shared by other participants.

Refraining from political speech

During times when speaking is permitted (Q & A, group meetings), I may speak about my experience and what is arising for me, including in relationship to the war. I agree to take care and to refrain from engaging in political analysis, ideological statements, evaluations, disputed factual claims, statements or judgments about the actions or beliefs of others (including other participants, political leaders, countries, people in my family or wider community).

Noticing and practicing with "othering"

I will practice noticing when my heart is closing, when I am "othering" someone who is different from me, or some part of myself that is different from how I understand myself. I will practice bringing compassionate curiosity to these noticings.

Following Teachers' Instructions



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I understand that the teachers are responsible for supporting the safety of our retreat for all participants. I agree to follow the teachers' guidance and instructions as they hold our community boundaries during times when speaking is permitted.

Safer Space / Brave Space

The teachers will do their best to maintain our retreat as an emotionally supportive space for all participants. I understand that there may still be times when I feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or activated. At these times, I may practice being in "brave space" - checking in to see what level of discomfort is present, and what I'm able to tolerate. If my discomfort extends beyond my "window of tolerance," I agree to take a break and/or to seek 1:1 support from a Teacher.

This document has been adapted from a statement by Rabbi Dev Noily, from an Or HaLev Jewish Meditation Retreat. Thank you, Rabbi Dev!