

## Five Key Elements for Planning a Personal Retreat

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The time to relax is when you don't have time for it."

*Sidney J. Harris*

When was the last time you gave yourself some time off to pamper and nourish yourself, to focus on BE-ing and not on DO-ing?

In our fast paced world with cell phones, blackberries, Facebook and Twitter, it's easy to get so overwhelmed that you think you'll never catch up with yourself. If you're a partner, a parent, a business owner, a busy professional or a volunteer, the demands of others can take a toll on your mental, physical and spiritual health.

Taking yourself on retreat is a great way to press the "reset" button of your life and to connect with your intuitive, creative inner self.

How do you know if you need a retreat? If you're tired or overwhelmed by all you have "to do", if you're scattered or lack focus, if you can't find peace and quiet at home, you are probably ready for a break. If your creative juices are all gone or if you give your time and energy to others and routinely put yourself last then you are a prime candidate for retreat!

Excuses abound when it comes to going on retreat. "I can't afford it" some say. "I don't have the time." Other nagging voices in your head can proclaim "How dare you take time off just for yourself? You don't deserve that." Or "There's too much to do. Going on retreat is a waste of time."

When you can dig beyond those excuses and shift your understanding to believing that you do deserve some time for you and know that the benefits are far-reaching (rest, clarity, creativity, energy), you're ready to start planning your retreat.

Here are 5 important elements to consider while planning your retreat:

1. **Determine your purpose** – Why are you going? What do you need? To rest? To be in nature? To be alone? To connect with others? What are you craving?

2. **Choose a great location** – It can be your backyard, a local park, the beach or half way across the country. Make sure it's a place that feels really good to you and will nourish you for a few hours or a few days.
3. **Make it a multisensory experience** – Include yummy food, beautiful scenery, scented candles or inspiring music. Be aware of all your senses when experiencing retreat.
4. **Create sacred space** – Create a little altar – something to mark the occasion. It can be with a candle or a rock or a pile of leaves – it doesn't need to be fancy – but something to mark that this is sacred time and space for you to retreat.
5. **Pick a creative retreat process** – Retreats are more meaningful if you have a *process* to focus your energy – it can be journaling, hiking, collaging, dancing, drumming or walking a labyrinth. Something to focus your attention so your mind's not wandering all over the place and you are able to access your inner creative muse.

In [The Woman's Retreat Book](#), Jennifer Loudon states “The intention of a retreat is not to change anything about you. Rather, it is to re-remember and burnish your divine connection to yourself, creating support and space to listen to and follow your own inner promptings. Time to catch up with yourself, to ponder the state of your life, to ask important questions, TO REST.”

Check your calendar right now. See when you can schedule your next retreat. Remember that a retreat doesn't have to be long or expensive to be effective. Even one hour sitting at the base of a tree trunk and day dreaming or a thirty minute bubble bath with candles and classical music can restore your soul in miraculous ways!

Elizabeth Barbour, M.Ed. is a Tallahassee based life & business coach. She leads retreats around the country on self care and spirituality for women entrepreneurs and professionals. Learn more about her retreats and workshops at [www.elizabethbarbour.com](http://www.elizabethbarbour.com) .