

Polishing the Mirror

an introduction to the
Enlightenment Intensive Retreat



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Cover art by Cameron Bahnson

What is an Enlightenment Intensive Retreat?

The core of the retreat is the meditating twosome or dyad.

Each participant selects and focuses on one of five fundamental questions during the retreat:

Who am I?
What am I?
What is Life?
What is Another?
What is Love?

A dozen times a day participants choose a partner and sit facing them on a pillow or a chair a comfortable distance apart. The two partners practice an easily learned technique called the dyad. During each forty minute dyad the two partners take turns being the contemplator and communicator or the attentive listener. The instructions are simple: set about to experience directly the essential Truth underlying your question and then tell your partner whatever occurs to you. There is a rest, walk, lecture or meal after each dyad. We practice this in a supportive environment under the guidance of an experienced facilitator and their staff.

The Retreat is for three full days and is fully residential.

Participants arrive by 7:30 p.m. on Thursday night. On Friday and Saturday the group session begins at 6:00 a.m. and ends at 10:00 p.m. The retreat ends at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday evening. All participants are expected to stay and sleep at the facility for the duration of the retreat. We recommend staying over Sunday night if possible but it is not required.

Meals are organic (when possible) and vegetarian.

What is Enlightenment?

Enlightenment is the *direct* experience of Truth.

Direct experience is beyond all the indirect methods we commonly depend on for knowing; sensing, thinking, believing, deciding, reasoning, or feeling. And yet, when a direct experience happens, it is self evident and beyond both certainty and doubt.

Truth is that which actually exists apart from how we sense, perceive, think, feel, describe, or learn about it

When one of the fundamental Truths of self, life, or another is experienced directly, it is called an enlightenment experience. It always occurs in a timeless instant, always in the present moment, beyond any doubt, and always changes one's state of being into a more enlightened or awakened state of consciousness.

Can you really get enlightened in just three days?

In the thirty years since Enlightenment Intensives began we have confirmation from thousands of people all over the world that it is the same experience that people have attained using other forms of self enquiry or meditation taking from two weeks to ten years. Yes, one can get enlightened in just three days. A significant percentage of participants succeed in three days. Experienced Truth seekers may find all their previous efforts rewarded during this concentrated effort. Those new to self enquiry often find it easier than veteran seekers who may have to overcome their own expectations. And many report having enlightenment experiences on the way home or in the days or weeks following the intensive.

"The Enlightenment Intensive was the highest spiritual experience of my life." - Peter Max, Artist

The steps leading to Enlightenment

There are eight steps or stages people pass through during the Enlightenment Intensive Retreat on the way to having a direct experience of the Truth.

No matter what method you use or path you choose, if it leads to enlightenment, it will take you through some of the following steps or stages. Participants may spend a lot or a little time in each stage and return to previous stages and, on occasion, jump ahead a stage. These are not requirements but observations.

Step One - Giving Answers. Taking the question (Who am I, for example) intellectually, you give your partner answers. The answers you give are already known to you. You have learned them from parents, teachers, clergy and friends. You have already figured out some answers in the past. By presenting these answers to your partner they will be cleared from your mind.

Step Two - Intellectualizing. In this stage you will think things out logically and reasonably. If this is true, then that must be true, and so on. Sometimes in this stage you may come upon the "correct" answer. But answers, correct or not, are not what we are looking for. This stage is finished when you stop trying to answer a question and begin to set about to experience it directly.

Step Three - Phenomena. In this stage you will have been using your brain to such a degree that it may begin to produce unfamiliar mental and physical phenomena. Visions may appear. The room may appear to distort. You may see auras around people and things. You may experience hot and cold flashes or waves of emotion running through your body.

"I no longer need to frantically look into people's eyes searching for myself. I don't dodge people on the sidewalk... I am feeling a oneness with everything. This is real a spiritual experience for me. There is no need to be lonely anymore." - Hal, bank executive

Step Four - The Void. In this stage you will find your field of consciousness empty. No thoughts occur and no progress appears to be made. At this stage you stop looking for yourself and, instead, seek to experience yourself directly. The difference between looking for something and seeking to experience it directly may seem subtle but it makes all the difference in the world. This stage is also known as the quieted mind and is the end goal of many schools of meditation.

Step Five - The barriers of emotion, pain, and death. You may experience feelings of fear, anger, grief, sadness, apathy, and serenity as you experience and communicate an emotional sense of self which you have confused with your True Self. The feelings of fear arise when you dis-identify or separate your True Self from with these mental-emotional ego states. The key to moving through these barriers is your willingness to experience whatever it takes to find the Truth.

Step Six is the **enlightenment** experience itself. Two things occur simultaneously. First you will have a direct conscious experience of yourself and, second, you will experience a release of energy and other side effects. It occurs in a timeless instant. You will know it as a definite breakthrough. There will be no doubt in your mind. You may laugh, cry, scream or feel ecstasy.

Step Seven is the **glow** in which you are radiating yourself as truth. You will feel totally in contact with yourself and your presence will radiate from you like a glow. This will continue until you have fully presented yourself to others.

Step Eight is the **pure steady state**. Once the energy is discharged, you will be in a steady state of being, able to present your true self to others and be in contact with it directly. The steady state will continue into your life to the degree that you continue to present the True You to others.

The guidelines

During an Enlightenment Intensive Retreat, participants are asked to honor the following guidelines:

1. Be prepared to eat, sleep and stay at the site of the intensive.
2. Put aside all outside concerns. If there is anything such as a telephone call or letter which must be received or sent by you, please take care of it before the intensive begins. All incoming messages, unless it is an emergency, will be held for you until the end of the Intensive.
3. Eat only the food and snacks we serve you. The diet is vegetarian and organic when possible.
4. No smoking, drugs, alcohol, coffee or caffeinated tea. You may want to stop using any of these a week prior to the retreat if you are subject to withdrawal symptoms such as headaches.
5. Leave your jewelry, makeup, perfume, cologne, and deodorants at home or in your car
6. Leave at home or in your car anything that may become a distraction such as books, magazines, journals, radio or tape/CD player, cellular phone or laptop.
7. Refrain from all sexual activity.
8. Put aside all other practices. We ask that you put all your efforts into using only the techniques taught during the intensive.
9. Some facilitators ask that participants observe silence outside the dyad sessions.

How was the Enlightenment Intensive Discovered?

The Enlightenment Intensive format was invented by Charles and Ava Berner in California in 1968. They had been using a dyad format in which two people would face each other and ask each other various questions concerning their relationship. They knew from this work that many problems could be resolved through honest, face-to-face communication. It occurred to Charles after reading Philip Kapleau's book, "The Three Pillars of Zen," that the dyad format which had worked so well in other areas of life might be used to answer life's most important questions. Charles and Ava gathered their students together and assigned them the question, "Who am I?" They were surprised and happy to find that within a period of just a few days the students were having enlightenment experiences.

Not affiliated with any organization

Enlightenment Intensives are not an exclusive part of any organization, religious or otherwise. There is nothing to join and no one to follow. The facilitators of Enlightenment Intensive Retreats are not members of any particular organization, religious or otherwise. There are, however, teachers, groups and schools who have added the Enlightenment Intensive in whole or in part to their teachings and practices simply because the technique works.

Words of praise from former participants

The Enlightenment Intensive empowers the individual to follow their own inner guidance and travel their own path. Proof of this can be found in the diversity of the personal statements which follow; a Catholic priest finds Christ; a poet finds transcendental bliss; a Zen scholar finds the Buddha. Each of them have experienced the absolute and each of them are using their own language and their own concepts to try to communicate that which is beyond description.:

"I highly recommend Enlightenment Intensives..."

"Enlightenment Intensives are very pure and very powerful. I can't say enough about the value they had for me. Enlightenment made apparent to me what my mind is and what I am, and I became conscious of what others actually are. As a result, my approach to martial arts completely transformed and my ability improved dramatically. I highly recommend Enlightenment Intensives to all students of martial arts, and to anyone." - Peter Ralston, Martial Artist

"I feel complete, wanting for nothing."

"When I am in union with myself, sounds are as if inside my body, voices vibrate in my chest, colors are bright and clear, my love comes out without holding back; I speak the truth clearly from deep inside me--totally satisfying and pleasurable. My face and eyes look straight at others; I am relaxed. Nothing in me wants to hide. There is no judgment, of myself or others. My breath flows clearly as if to my toes with no congestion, because there is no congestion in my mind--because there is no mind. I occupy every part of my body--nothing can hurt me. I feel complete, wanting for nothing. I am gentle, at one with others. I could not hurt them. I know their thoughts. I do not think to do anything; it is done. There is no space, no delay between me and my actions. I am appropriate, balanced. Ecstasy flows through my body and being like waves. I feel humble, grateful for this state of grace. The truth has set me free..." - Osha Reader, Enlightenment Intensive Master, Director of Origin Retreat Center

"It was a life and death struggle to me."

"When my last turn was over, I was heart broken... I just couldn't believe it was over. Meanwhile energy was pouring through me, and it kept rising, growing more intense even as I listened to my partner... Then the final bell rang. And split my mind in two. That was when I got who I am. It was total. I think I whooped with laughter but I'm not sure now. I just sat on the floor in what must have been the ultimate state of flabbergastedness. Once could have been a fluke... But twice! In one lifetime: twice!!!- Murray Kennedy

“An acutely Christian experience...”

“ I suddenly grasped hold of the question and for a brief moment possessed the answer. The intuitive flash, the direct experience of who I am. It came and went but with so much power I was taken over by its energy for a number of hours... for me it is an acute Christian experience. I believe I discovered, for the first time; the meaning of St. Paul's words, "*I live, now not I but Christ lives in me.*" That momentary flash was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and where this leads I have no idea. The Spirit blows where He wills.” - V.K., Catholic Priest

I dared not believe that Satori could be achieved in 3 days.

This occurred after leaving an Intensive...

“I was overcome by tremendous emotion that welled up in great waves from within. My breathing of itself became most strange with enormous full exhalations. I felt I was breathing out all the pain and agony of the last few years - getting rid indeed of myself. I cried and laughed for a long time in Hazel's arms...We both experienced the same unbelievable total emptiness of mind.. Silence and emptiness. We were gasping out words like 'incredible,' 'extraordinary,' 'who would have thought it', and so on. As we embraced, we seemed to be standing literally in the portals of the great void...Suddenly I solved my last question from you and then, turning to older koans, I seemed to get direct insight into them one after the other. Old puzzles that had fascinated me for years suddenly yielded obvious answers. The intellectual trickery was gone -here was a direct seeing into the meaning. Every time an answer bloomed like a flower in the mind, I got a shock of discovery. Not as full or as overwhelming as finding out who I was but nevertheless considerable... I look out of the windows of my eyes in a different way from before.”

“ I dared not initially believe that Satori could be achieved in three days. I am amazed... I have read and thought about Zen for years, struggled with it indeed, but only now do I see without any doubts its essential point. I am I and act in that. While I have had important and valuable meditative experiences before, they had never undercut the ego process or let me gain an insight into non-duality. I feel now completely sure...” - John Crook, PhD.

“The sound of stillness is in my soul...”

“The Enlightenment Intensive format does more to help one towards wholeness than anything else I know. I have been to three, and they have been the most stimulating, awareness producing, even mystical, events in my life... During Enlightenment Intensives I have had times of aching boredom, of tense frustration, of deadness and exhaustion. I have had moments of surging energy and great elation. I have experienced universal laughter and unique pain and grief. I have felt loneliness and isolation; truthful eloquence alternates with inarticulate dumbness and verbal diarrhea. Inner chaos and tension gives way to equilibrium and meditative stillness.”

“After my second E.I. I wrote the following poem, which contains the essence of that experience, for me:”

*I have trodden in the vacant interstellar spaces
I have frozen in the hub of the universe
The sound of stillness is in my soul.*

*I have heard the silence of a hawthorn tree
I have felt the trembling cracking of its branches
I know its strength and its fragility.*

*I have seen hope and strength shine from another's face
I been transfixed by love, and felt another's doubting agony,
I have met another across infinite space.*

Hilary Sinclair, Self and Society Magazine, London

“The meditation is tremendously powerful..”

"That question is very good. Ramana Maharishi used only that meditation. Through that meditation he attained his enlightenment, asking 'Who am I?' That was his whole yoga, nothing else."

"The meditation is tremendously powerful. but one should go as deep as possible. One should allow it to sink to one's innermost core. It should penetrate you like an arrow going on and on and on, and suddenly one day a moment comes as if you are drilling a hole and suddenly the drill has penetrated to the other side. It is a drilling exactly like that. Who am I? Who am I? Who am I? Go on drilling and then suddenly you see that you have drilled the hole, you have inched to the core and it is tremendously beautiful!"

"You have to be alone and alone and alone. You have to seek a point, a virgin point within your being which has never been traveled before. Nobody can enter there except you. And you too can only enter up to a certain extent. A point comes when you are also left outside. Something enters... but not you. The I is left out at the door. You enter as energy, nameless, formless, but not as you have known yourself. Your whole identity is lost. Your whole address is no more there. You don't know who you are. You enter only when you don't know who you are. Then suddenly you are inside the shrine and you know who you are. But this has nothing to do with your previous identity."

"So it is a different method. But I would like you to do it... and work as hard as you can." - Osho



Jeremiah Jeff Love

has presented Enlightenment Intensive Retreats since 1969 in the U.S., Canada, England and throughout Western Europe. Having worked at Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California with some of the pioneers of Humanistic Psychology, he studied with Charles Berner, the originator of the Enlightenment Intensive. He co-

founded Bridge Mountain near Santa Cruz, California; Center in Amsterdam, Holland and Finca la Follenca in Malaga, Spain, Europe's first fully residential growth center. He is the author of "The Quantum Gods."

Enlightenment Intensive Retreats with Jeremiah Jeff Love

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