



Living in the Greater Mandala

International Urban Retreat 2015

Urban Retreat 2015: Resolve – Remind – Review

We don't want the Urban Retreat to be another thing like New Year Resolutions, where our enthusiasm is short lived, and we forget to carry out our intentions. We have to find a way to actually bring those intentions into our lives. "Resolve – Remind – Review" is a simple little tool for helping you to keep your practice on course day-to-day, in the midst of a busy life. It is about creating the conditions that support practice.

Resolve

First of all, make a clear resolve. What are you going to try and practice this week? In other words, based on your reflections this morning, form some precepts – some principles and guidelines for training. Make them as specific and particular as possible, not just general, vague statements of your good intention.

You don't have to gain Enlightenment in one week! In other words, be realistic – just one or two precepts that you'll actively engage with is better than ten big precepts that are likely to remain on the level of aspiration. Or rather, have the big aspiration, but also chunk that down into a few more practical propositions.

The suggestion is to make resolutions in three areas:

- i) Deciding what you'd like to do in your **meditation practice** each day (e.g. choosing a particular practice, doing an extra meditation, looking out for a particular habit).
- ii) Then any resolutions for "living in the Greater Mandala" in your daily life.
- iii) Then it might also help you to think: **what might get in my way** as I try to practice these resolutions? What can do to prevent that happening? (For example, you have a tendency to get distracted by emails or Facebook in the morning, when you could be meditating, so you resolve not to switch on your phone until after breakfast.)

Remind

Then we need reminders and supports for when we're in the midst of busyness that might otherwise distract us from our deeper purpose.

i) Slogans

Form your resolutions into really pithy (even a bit lighthearted and humorous – see it as play, not just work!) slogans. Pin them up on your desk, or use those magnetic letters on your fridge to spell them out, or make them your computer screensaver for the week.

ii) Rituals

Create rituals and routines that also help remind and support your intention. Here are some possible ideas:

* Maybe have two-minute mindfulness breaks in your day to "step-back" and create more awareness.

*Or chant a mantra when walking to work, or every time you make a cup of tea, as a way of reconnecting.

*At home, you could do the Dedication Ceremony each morning, and/or have readings and reflections that relate to your resolutions, and/or create a special shrine.

iii) Dharma-buddies

You will already have asked a friend to "buddy-up" with you for the week, so you can talk to each other about your resolutions and progress in practicing with them. Make sure you've made a date with them, don't just leave it to one of you to contact the other, as you know what will happen otherwise! Meet for coffee, or chat on the phone or, at the very least, text each other. Meeting and talking will also act as a reminder and a support.

Review

Lastly, we need to review. Each day ask yourself how it is going. Are my precepts proving helpful? Do I need to refine the precepts – perhaps making them a bit more specific, or adjusting the precept to take into account what I've learnt so far? Do I need to be a bit more realistic, or could I be more ambitious? Am I staying inspired? Am I creating enough supportive conditions? It is all about learning as you go: if we don't always do what we intended the point is not to beat ourselves up, but to see what you can learn for the future.