

Retreat Participation Agreement

Presence and Practice: Working with Self-Criticism

Date/Time: April 27, 9:00am–3:00pm

Hosted by: Northstar Center | Marlena McEachron, PsyD; Licensed Clinical Psychologist

Location: The Lodge at Hal & Bernie Hanson Park; 23394 Endeavor Dr, Aldie, VA 20105

Welcome & Retreat Overview

Presence and Practice: Working with Self-Criticism is a small-group, in-person retreat designed to support mindful awareness and self-compassion in a calm, structured, trauma-informed environment. This experiential retreat focuses on learning to relate to self-doubt and self-criticism with greater clarity, compassion, and wisdom. The retreat offers guided mindfulness and self-compassion practices informed by evidence-based approaches, including Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness, compassion-based frameworks, and Insight Meditation. In practice, this means structured periods of guided meditation, reflection, journaling, and gentle inquiry focused on noticing patterns of self-criticism and learning new ways to respond with awareness and nonjudgment.

The retreat is facilitated by **Marlena McEachron, PsyD**, licensed clinical psychologist and owner of Northstar Center, a mental health private practice in Ashburn, soon-to-be Leesburg, Virginia. Dr. McEachron created this retreat as an invitation to pause and choose yourself; to step out of habitual self-criticism and into a day of intentional practice. The skills and practices offered are designed to be carried beyond the retreat, supporting participants in integrating what they learn into daily life and, if applicable, deepening the work through ongoing personal reflection or therapy.

Purpose & Scope of the Retreat

This retreat is an educational and experiential wellness offering. It is not psychotherapy, psychological treatment, crisis intervention, or a substitute for mental health care. The retreat does not involve diagnosis, treatment planning, or processing of individual trauma histories. Participation does not establish a therapist-client relationship.

If you are currently in crisis or need immediate support, please contact emergency services (911) or the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988).

Is This the Right Retreat for Me?

This retreat may be a good fit if you:

- Experience self-doubt, perfectionism, or harsh self-criticism
- Are in a constant state of doing
- Want a calm, structured day of mindfulness, reflection, and practice
- Are able to care for yourself in a group setting (taking breaks, opting out, or stepping out as needed)

This retreat is NOT a good fit if you are currently:

- In a mental health crisis or need urgent support
- Experiencing active suicidal thoughts or self-harm urges
- Experiencing unmanaged mania or psychosis
- Experiencing severe dissociation that makes it difficult to remain oriented in a group setting
- Chronically using alcohol, cannabis, or other substances
- In need of a higher level of care (e.g., recent psychiatric hospitalization)

If you are unsure whether this retreat is appropriate for you, please reach out to the facilitator at info@northstarcenterva.com.

Participation Guidelines

- Participation is voluntary. You may opt out of any practice, modify movement, remain seated, take breaks, or step out at any time. Sharing is always optional.
- Much of the retreat will be held in partial silence to support presence and reflection, with a few brief, structured opportunities for optional sharing.
- Please arrive on time and return promptly from breaks. Late entry after the retreat begins is not permitted.
- Respectful, nonjudgmental conduct is expected. Please speak from your own experience ("I" statements), avoid advice-giving, and treat others with care and respect.
- Confidentiality is expected, though it cannot be guaranteed in a group setting.
- No substances. Participants may not attend under the influence of alcohol, cannabis/THC, or other substances that impair awareness or safety.
- Audio or video recording, photography, or screenshots are strictly prohibited and may result in removal from the retreat.

Flow of the Day

- **Arrival & Check-In (Doors Open: 9:00 am)**
Participants arrive, check in, choose seating, and take time to settle into the space. Coffee, tea, water, and whole fruit are available. This period is intentionally unstructured to support a calm transition into the day.
- **Opening & Orientation (9:30 am)**
The retreat begins promptly at 9:30 am with a brief orientation to the day, including an overview of the structure, participation guidelines, and an invitation to approach the practices with curiosity, choice, and care. Entry after this time is not permitted.
- **Morning Practice Block**
The morning includes guided mindfulness and self-compassion practices, periods of quiet reflection, and journaling. Practices focus on noticing patterns of self-criticism and learning to respond with greater awareness and kindness. Much of this portion of the day is held in partial silence to support presence and inward attention.

- **Midday Break, Gentle Movement & Lunch**
Participants engage in gentle walking meditation and take time to eat lunch. This time supports integration and nervous system regulation before the afternoon practices.
 - Please pack a meal or snacks that are nourishing and support your body and mind to be alert and present
- **Afternoon Practice & Integration**
The afternoon includes additional guided practices and reflective exercises.
- **Closing Practice (3:00 pm)**
The retreat concludes with a closing practice and brief reflections to support transition back into daily life. The venue will close doors at 3:30pm.

Fees, Cancellations & Transfers

- Early Bird registration \$389 – starts February 27
- Retreat Fee: \$425 – starts February 28
- Registration Ends April 10, 2026
- **Cancellations:**
 - Full refund (minus credit card fees) with written request to info@northstarcenterva.com up to 21 days before the retreat
 - 50% refund 20–8 days before the retreat
 - No refunds within 7 days of the retreat
- **Transfers:** Registration may be transferred to another person up to 48 hours before the retreat.

Acknowledgment

By registering, you acknowledge that you have read, understand, and agree to the guidelines and limitations outlined in this Retreat Participant Agreement.