Walking Meditation Instructions

There are various methods for practicing walking meditation. There is no “right” way to do it. With any form of walking meditation, the primary intention is to stay mindful of the present moment.

Formal walking meditation can help focus the mind and develop both concentration and mindfulness. Some people begin their daily meditation with 10-15 minutes of walking meditation before they sit.

Developing awareness this way can carry over into daily life as we move our bodies from place to place in the course of the day. We can practice mindful walking as we get up from our desks to walk to another room, as we walk to the car, to the house, to the store, to answer the phone….etc…

**PACE:** Walking meditation can be done at any pace, varying from our normal walking pace, to extremely slow. For some, slowing the pace can aid concentration. For some, back and balance problems can sometimes inform us what speed is appropriate for our bodies.

Many meditation retreats consist of alternating periods of sitting and walking meditation. The idea is to aim for attention that is continuous. Paying careful attention to the transition between sitting and walking or walking and sitting is very helpful in supporting this continuity.

**Method 1**

1. Find a pathway about 30 feet long.
2. Find a pace that gives you a sense of ease as you walk.
3. Let your attention settle on your feet and lower legs.
4. Feel the contact with the ground.
5. Feel what it’s like for the legs and feet to contract as you lift the leg, and feel the movement of the leg as it swings through the air. Feel the contact with the ground.
6. If helpful, silently label movements corresponding with your speed:
   a. If fast pace: *step… step*
   b. If moderate: *lifting, placing*
   c. If slow: *lifting, moving, placing*
7. At the end of the path, come to a full stop. Notice your whole body.
8. Slowly and mindfully turn around, and stop again. Notice your whole body.
9. Set your intention to be mindful during the next pass and begin again.
10. Keep a soft gaze, eyes slightly downward without looking at anything in particular. Don’t look at your feet, but feel the sensations of movement and contact from within. Some people find it useful to keep the eyelids half closed.
11. If a strong sensation, emotion or thought compels your attention, it can be helpful to stop, notice it until it passes, and then return to walking.

**Method 2**

**Alternate Method for Fast Pace:**
Focus on feeling the body “globally” as it moves through the air. Be aware of your entire body moving. Some people use this method when they go for a walk, or it can be practiced in a similar manner to Method 1 above, using a 30 foot pathway and walking back and forth.
Method 3

Slow Walking – Coordinating with Breath

1. Find a pathway about 30 feet long.
2. Begin by standing and noticing your breathing, just as you do in sitting meditation. Relax.
3. **Raise your right foot on the in-breath**, heel first, then the sole of the foot, then the toes. Move the foot forward as the breath continues, and **as you exhale, place it on the ground**, finishing the step, with the heel just ahead of the toes of the other foot.
   a. On the next inhale do the same with the left foot. Alternate with each breath.
4. Your primary attention is to the feet as they leave the ground, move, and touch the ground again. The breath is in the background, dictating the pace.
5. Let the breath set the pace.
6. At the end of the path, stop and stand and breathe mindfully for a few moments, then slowly and mindfully turn around and stop again and take a few mindful breaths. Begin again.
7. Keep a soft gaze, eyes slightly downward without looking at anything in particular. Don’t look at your feet, but feel the sensations of movement and contact from within. Some people find it useful to keep the eyelids half closed.
8. If a strong sensation, emotion or thought compels your attention, it can be helpful to stop, notice it until it passes, and then return to walking.

Method 4

Metta or Lovingkindness Meditation

For those of you who practice Metta or Lovingkindness Meditation, you can also use the phrases during Walking Meditation. You can practice by repeating the phrases as you walk, or connecting them to the rhythm of your steps, or the rhythm of your breaths.

Resources:

Gil Fronsdal’s Instruction for Walking Meditation
[http://insightmeditationcenter.org/articles/walkingmeditation.html](http://insightmeditationcenter.org/articles/walkingmeditation.html)

A 7 minute Audio of Gil Fronsdal’s Instructions for Walking Meditation above can be found on this page: [http://insightmeditationcenter.org/imc-medinstruct.html](http://insightmeditationcenter.org/imc-medinstruct.html)