



Walking meditation, some explanation

Walking meditation is an important Samatha & Vipassana technique. It is a unique way to calm yourself down, to relax and to connect with all your senses. Your feet massage the floor, the soil, the earth and the floor massages your feet. You connect with the outside world by your senses and calm down and let go by every step you take by the slow way of concentrated walking (Samatha). You connect with and concentrate more and more on yourself and your breathing (Vipassana) can be a second step in your walking meditation.

Actually you can see walking meditation as 'mindful walking'. Being aware of every step you take. You concentrate on your walking by 'cutting' your steps into several pieces and try to be aware of every part of the movement during every step you take.

The basic walking meditation exercise is similar to normal walking, only slower and more deliberate. Your attention should be minutely focused on each action.

The primary object during walking meditation is the motion of the feet — with an emphasis on motion (as opposed to the physical feet *per se*). Observing the movement of the feet does not differ in essence from observing the rising-falling movements during breathing. If you can, mentally isolate the motion itself from the corporeal foot— the bones and muscles— and only observe the motion. Though it may seem difficult at first, isolating and observing motion will get easier with practice.

Pay no attention to the abdominal movements during this exercise. Just breath normally.

Don't look at your feet. Just be aware of the movements with your mind. Soften the muscles of your feet so you can be much more aware of the temperature of the ground, the structure of the floor, etc.. Unlock your knees. So you are flexible like bamboo.

Try, at first, to keep your head in balance. An easy way to do this is to try to connect with the horizon. During your walk it will help you to stay easier in physical balance as well. Keeping your head in balance also supports the relaxation of muscles in neck and shoulder area. Think about the weight of your head (about 5½ – 6 kg / 12 – 13 pounds). Working with your computer and mobile devices strange enough you get used to carry your head this unbalanced way for about 16 hours a day. Think about walking 16 hours a day with a bag of potatoes or rice in your hands with the same weight. Some relaxation (awareness to keep your head in balance) can be really helpful.



The best environment to do walking meditation is one with few visual distractions. Our The Pavana Chiang Mai Resort Sala's with the natural sounds around can be wonderful off course but for sure, at home and in your own environment, you can find a nice place. Try walking meditation on wooden floors, on stone, sand, (wet) grass, or other material. Give it a try and be aware of the different sensations it will bring you.

Remove your shoes, if possible. You should have enough space to walk at least seven paces in a straight line.

Once you are standing, hold the hands in front of the body, one hand gently clasping the wrist of the other. Another option is to just let them hang down or hold them on the back of your body. Just find out for yourself what is the most comfortable.

Do not allow your eyes to look around, but keep them directed straight ahead (try to connect with the horizon) or slightly downcast toward the floor (but don't bend your neck too far forward. This may cause discomfort as I told before). Don't turn your head independently. Even when you turn around at the end of the walking path, keep your head in a straight line with the body, as if you were wearing a neck brace. Relax your shoulders.



Basic Walking Exercise

1. Observe the standing posture, noting "standing" for a few moments. This means to focus awareness on the posture of the body as you stand. Bringing your weight down.
If this is difficult you can choose one point to focus on, such as the pressure of the soles of your feet touching the floor.
2. Before moving, note "intending to walk." (Don't skip this step).
3. Always start with the right foot.
4. Slowly lift the right foot and place it down, taking one step. This should be a single fluid motion without breaks. Be aware of the entire arc of movement from beginning to end. As you do so, label the step "placing" (remember to label while the motion is happening, not afterwards). The left foot should not have moved. The left heel should still be on the ground. Pause (i.e., stop moving completely for a second or two).
5. Slowly take a step with the left foot, noting "placing." Pause.
6. Continue walking, pausing for about one second between each step. Only move one foot at a time.
7. When you reach the end of the walking path, place the feet together on the last step, noting "stopping." Pause.
8. Note "standing" for several moments.
9. Now you will begin to turn, in four steps. Note "intending to turn."
10. Lift the toes of your right foot and pivot on that heel, turning to your right. At the same time, say the mental note "turning." The right heel should stay on the ground. Be sure to keep your head in line with your torso. The left foot should not move. Pause.
11. Lift the left foot and place it down next to the right. (The left foot doesn't pivot, but steps). Note "turning." You should have moved about ninety degrees. Pause.
12. Pivot on the right heel again, noting "turning." Pause.
13. Lift the left foot and place it down next to the right, noting "turning." By now you should be facing in the opposite direction, having turned one-hundred-and-eighty degrees.
14. Repeat steps 1-12.

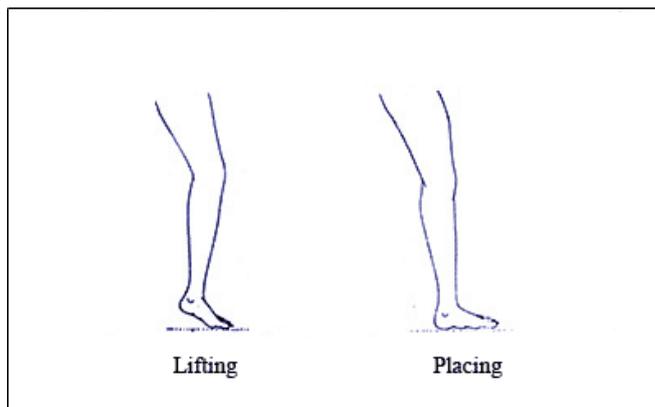
That is the basic exercise. Next we'll give five variations in which each step is broken down into a series of smaller movements. Substitute any variation for instructions number 3 and 5 above. The rest of the exercise is the same.

A word of advice: don't move on to the variations until you feel adept at the basic exercise. And don't proceed to the next variation until you've mastered the previous one. That may take one week, one month, or longer. (During an intensive retreat, however, you might spend only one day on each variation.)

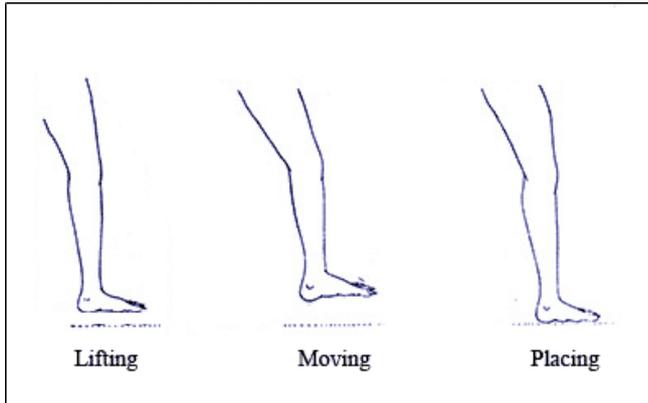
Remember that the "resting" foot should not come off the floor until the active foot has finished moving. Don't forget to stop moving completely between each segment of a step.

Advanced Walking Meditation

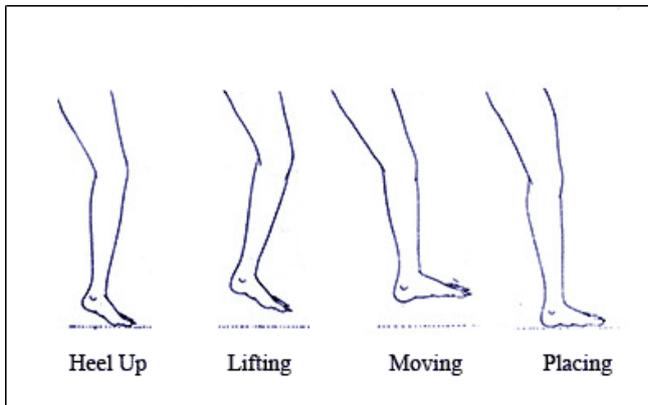
The two-part step: (Lifting, placing / putting). Lift the heel, noting "lifting" (the toes are still on the floor). Pause. Now move the whole foot forward and place it on the floor, noting "placing" or "Putting". Another option is to connect with: "Right goes thus, Left goes thus".



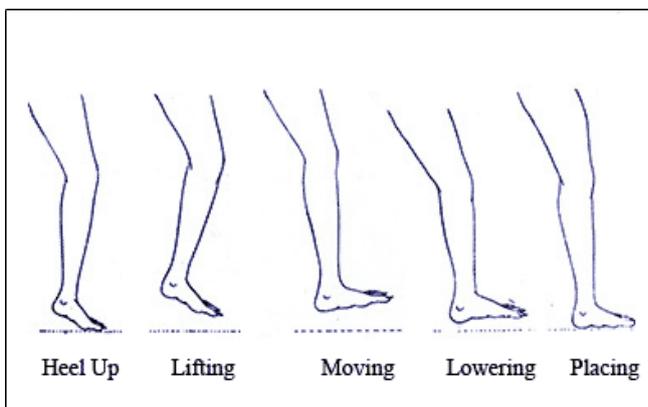
The three-part step. (Lifting, moving, placing). Lift the whole foot straight up as a unit, noting "lifting." Pause. Move the foot forward, noting "moving." Pause. Place the whole foot down as a unit, noting "placing" or "putting".



The four-part step: (Heel up, lifting, moving, placing / putting). Lift the heel, noting "heel up." Pause. Lift the whole foot straight up, noting "lifting." Pause. Move the foot forward, noting "moving." Pause. Place the foot down as a unit, noting "placing" or "putting".



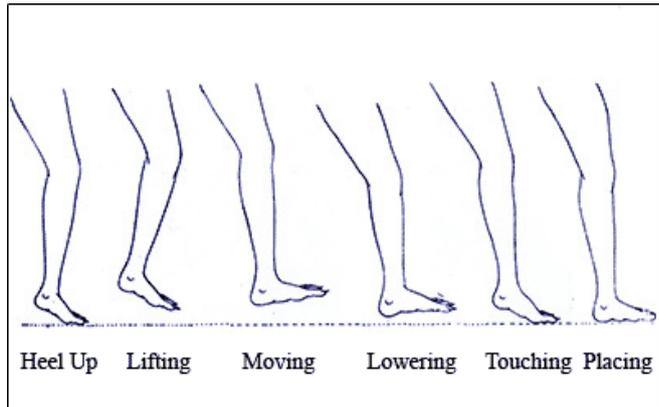
The five-part step: (Heel up, lifting, moving, lowering, placing / putting). Lift the heel, noting "heel up." Pause. Lift the whole foot straight up, noting "lifting." Pause. Move the foot forward, noting "moving." Pause. Stopping about an inch from the floor, lower the foot as a unit, noting "lowering." Pause. (Be certain to stop completely here.) Place the whole foot on the floor, noting "placing" or "putting".



The six-part step: (Heel up, lifting, moving, lowering, touching, placing / putting) or (Heel up, lifting, moving, lowering, placing / putting, pressing). Lift the heel, noting "heel up." Pause. Lift the foot straight up, noting "lifting." Pause. Move the foot forward, noting "moving." Pause. Stopping about an



inch from the floor, lower the foot, noting "lowering." Pause. Touch the toes — only the toes— to the floor, noting "touching." Pause. Place the heel on the floor, noting "placing / "putting.



As said, there can be a variation to this six-part step by: Heel up, lifting, moving, lowering, placing / putting, pressing.

Before ending your exercise

After you finish your walking steps connect with this closing procedure.

Just before finishing tell yourself "Intending to stop". This is just to prepare you for stopping (but you walk on for a couple of moments in the same step.

Tell yourself three times the word "Stopping". At the third time you stop walking.

Tell yourself the word "Standing" and be very much aware of standing, just as you did before you started with the walking during this exercise.

Gently close your eyes and concentrate on yourself and your breathing. Take a very deep breath in and hold for a while. Being aware of a feeling of being tensed up, full. After a while breath out by your mouth and totally let go. Hold for a while again. Being aware of a feeling of being empty.

After a short while breath normally, open your eyes, move or shake your body and continue with the things you need to do. Trying to keep the inner silence and awareness.

[Thanks to: D.I.Y. Dharma]

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