

WALKING MEDITATIONS

Four different body postures can be used for most meditation exercises:

Sitting (on a mat or a chair)

Standing

Walking

Reclining (although not so comfortably that it causes sleepiness)

It can be helpful to alternate through different body postures during most meditation sessions. In all meditation postures, even when reclining, your back should be kept straight, with the natural alignment of the spine, not flat as a ruler. (See also Lama Lodro's handout "Conditions that Support Meditation").

Walking postures, in particular, can greatly enhance and stabilize many forms of meditation.

Walking meditations can be done either indoors or outdoors, but usually require a relatively level and straight path at least 20 feet long. The Energizing walk (below) is one of the few exceptions in regard to terrain and distance.

ENERGIZING WALK

- ▶ A mindfulness exercise which helps restore tranquillity, continuity of attention, and concentration in preparation for more focused meditations.
 - ▶ Refreshes and energizes the mind and body.
 - ▶ Can be done on uneven and variegated terrain over an extended distance.
1. **Start:** bring your two feet together side by side.
 2. Rest your gaze on the ground approximately 10 feet ahead of you.
 3. Mentally express the intention to start walking.
 4. Step forward commencing with your right foot.
 5. Proceed forward briskly but loosely with a somewhat extended stride.
 6. Relax physically, but maintain an overall awareness of the body.
 7. **Finish:** stop, place your feet side by side, and conclude with an aspiration for the sharing of merit.

CALMING WALK

- ▶ This is a classic meditation “walking posture”.
 - ▶ Effective for stabilizing and enhancing many types of contemplation and meditation exercises, including: Breathing meditations, Insight meditations, Absorption meditations, Vipassana, Metta, the Thirty-two Parts of the Body, mantra recitations, etcetera.
 - ▶ Requires a relatively level, clear, straight path that is at least 20 feet long.
1. **Start:** bring your two feet together side by side. Check that your posture is upright and your back straight (following the natural curvature of your spine, not straight as a ruler).
 2. Rest your gaze on the ground approximately 10 feet ahead of you.
 3. Mentally express the intention to start walking.
 4. Step forward slowly and carefully, commencing with your right foot.
 5. Bring your attention to the specific meditation or contemplation exercise you are using during this session, but try and also keep an overall awareness of your body while walking.
 6. As you meditate, walk forward slowly and carefully, with a relaxed, upright posture and straight back. Step gently on the ground as you walk.
 7. When you turn your body, first place your attention in your feet and turn slowly using smooth, careful movements of your feet, being mindful of the movement of your feet and the balance of your body.
 8. After turning, stand still and place your two feet side by side.
 9. Mentally express the intention to start walking.
 10. Step forward commencing with your right foot.
 11. Return your primary attention to the meditation or contemplation, while keeping an overall awareness of your body.
 12. Repeat the processes above, moving back and forth along your pathway.
 13. **Finish:** stop, place your feet side by side, and conclude with an aspiration for the sharing of merit.

AWARENESS WALK

- ▶ An intense Vipassana meditation exercise designed to keep your attention continually focused on the object/s of concentration, which are your feet.
 - ▶ Requires a relatively level, clear, straight path that is at least 20 feet long.
- 1 – **Lifting:** Place both feet together, balance your body, and mentally express the intention to lift your right foot. As soon as you begin to lift your foot, silently and steadily repeat the word “lifting” while lifting the foot.
 - 2 – **Moving:** As soon as you begin to move the foot forward, silently and steadily repeat the word “moving” for as long as you are moving the foot.
 - 3 – **Placing:** As soon as you begin to lower the foot, repeat to yourself the word “placing” until the foot is placed securely on the ground.
 - 4 – **Review:** As soon as you have securely placed the foot on the ground, do a rapid mental review to determine which of the three actions: lifting, moving, or placing of the foot registered most clearly.
 - 5 – **Repeat:** Repeat the above sequence from step 1 to 4 with each step you take.
 - 6 – **Stopping:** At the end of your walk path, come to a stop your feet side by side.
 - 7 – **Turning:**
 - a. Turn slowly in small increments, either to the left or right, until you are facing the direction you have just come from.
 - b. As you turn, pivot on one foot while keeping the heel in contact with the ground.
 - c. Then bring the other foot alongside the pivoted foot.
 - d. Use three or four small steps to turn each foot 180 degrees.
 - e. Mentally say “left foot turning”, “right foot turning” in unison with each movement.
 - 8 – **Standing:**
 - a. When you stop turning, say “standing”.
 - b. While standing, mentally move your attention from the soles of your feet through your body to the top of your head and back to the soles of your feet.
 - c. Repeat this body sweep several times.
 - 9 – **Repeat:** Return to Step 1 and repeat the entire sequence to Step 9.
 - 10 – **Finish:** Stop, place your feet side by side, and conclude with an aspiration for the sharing of merit.

 *May You and All Beings be Well and Happy* 