

Meditation Practice – Breathing Practice – Walking Meditation

(Compiled in January 2021)

Foreword

This compilation contains materials from the email exchange with Bodo Balsys and his students.

The information and instructions are kept impersonal and mostly only the answer is used and then categorized according to a subtitle, which often already contains the topic and the question.

Usually, the Sanskrit terms appearing in '*A Treatise on Mind*' and the books that followed are explained therein.

You can find on the webpage the esoteric glossary and the recommended reading.

<https://universaldharma.com/resources/esoteric-glossary/> and

<https://universaldharma.com/resources/recommended-reading/>

It is helpful to refer primarily to the esoteric glossary and the definition of the terminology in Bodo Balsys books. The Buddhist terms can have different definitions and meanings depending on the Buddhist school. A great way to compare them is to use 'The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism', and internet resources like:

https://theosophy.wiki/en/Main_Page and

https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Main_Page

Additional comments from the compiler in brackets [...]

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Outline of the Teachings

Generally Exoteric Buddhist teachings relate to the preliminary stages of the path of Initiation, the path of aspiration and probation leading to the **first Initiation**, related to the Element **Earth**. Hence his teachings on such things as Mindfulness of Breathing via slow walking, and focus of being in the **now** whilst eating etc. (The focus is **healing** basic emotions related to the '**I, me, mine**' in relation to physical plane pursuits and interrelation with others, hence is also Earthy.)

My teachings, on the other hand, more or less takes the first Initiation for granted, and so the teachings are mainly concerned with Mastery of the **Watery Element** (hence of the emotions, cleansing *saṃkāras* and the psychic domains), as well as proper receptivity to the Fiery Element and its development when refined with the Airy Breath - the form of mindfulness of breathing with respect to cosmos I mentioned earlier [See 'Cosmic Breathing']. The development of receptivity to the *prāṇas* of the higher Elements then explains the difference between our approaches to the dharma. General Buddhist practices prepares for the advanced, much more complex and vaster teachings I present, and so all have the opportunity to travel the higher Way, for those that recognise the opportunity to progress thusly.

New practices and meditations then come to the view, and some of the old practices therefore are left behind. Everything is transient in *saṃsāra*. Hence one's practice also changes as one progresses upon the path.

Formal Practice

We do **not** recommend sitting for a long time, it can be quite disadvantageous, as the practitioner generally falls into evil of the will-of-mind to try to project what they think ought to be, and this is but a form of desire of mind, or pride of mind. Best to be comfortable in the meditation, and when there is a strain in the mind then stop. (Again this is opposite to the Zen tradition, but produces proper valuable results much faster, i.e., it quickens considerably the path to enlightenment.) There is no hurry 'to get there'. Impressions come and go, and the genuine ones should be properly analysed through contemplation afterwards, which is but a continuation of the meditation practice. there is also walking meditation, gaining insights, intuitions, flashes of realisation when doing normal chores, even being on the toilet. The formal sitting meditation is but a conditional practice for the 'walking meditation' which carries the meditation throughout the day.

Thus **do not** project personality will to try to force an outcome that you desire to happen. Take each meditation sequence in its stride, and simply learn to relax the mind, try to keep meditative throughout the day in everything you do. Meditation is

not just when you formerly sit for it, remember cultivating *pratyakṣa* is in many ways the **main** practice, also when you are studying the sacred texts, you **meditate** upon the concepts and imagery produced. All of the time you are working upon cleansing and transmuting emotions, and so **constant self-observation** is an important part of the practice.

With respect to formal meditation, to try to ‘maintain a stable long term samadhi’ is not so easy. The first thing both of you need to take into account is that receptivity in meditation is **cyclic, it comes in waves**. Much depends upon your inner self, and opportunity to impress your mind with images and energies, which help to keep meditative focus. (The energies, or ‘gift waves’ from above.) Be thankful in the times when the impressions come, and so then you can keep your mind steady in the impression (*samādhi*) and at other times it suffices for you to simply go through the routine of the *sādhana* [“method” or “technique,” used especially in reference to a tantric ritual designed to receive attainments (*siddhi*) from a deity.], the exercises and mantras you use in practice. Therefore **do not** push your meditation too long if there is difficulty in your mind, if *saṃskāras* present obstacles. It is for this reason that I do not advocate trying to have long meditations. Look at the hindrances and try to cleanse these for the future. Understand there should never be the concept of ‘**rush**’ to accomplish whatever you wish to achieve in meditation, always go with the flow of what is happening and so relax your mind, never force your mind to try to achieve whatever you wish to achieve. Let go of spiritual ambition, but work steadily upon the visioned goal. You have plenty of time to get enlightened, it is a process planned for you to achieve over quite a sequence of time, as there is much mastery of *citta-vṛtti* (modifications of mind, or mental substance) to be attained. Good things come in small steps.

Meditative Mind States

Your discursive mind, which though useful when thinking out philosophy and talking to others must be put into abeyance in meditation. It blocks the flow of your visions. Learn to simply observe the flow of what you are shown and follow instructions. (The true meaning of the term *śamatha*.) Let go, let go of your empirical mind in meditation, therein it is your great enemy. ‘The mind is the slayer of the Real, let the disciple slay the slayer’ (*Book of Golden Precepts*, by H. P. Blavatsky under the title *The Voice of the Silence*).

One Pointed Abiding - Concentration

The term *dhyāna* means 'concentration, a one-pointed abiding in an unwavering state of mind'. It is a state of absorbed contemplation, of deep meditation and abstraction into the causal realms of the abstract Mind or higher, according to the abilities of the meditator. The objective inevitably is to experience the lucid Clear-Mind state of enlightenment, of residence at the *śūnyatā-saṃsāra* nexus. In the mastery of *dhyāna* lies the key to the experiencing of Reality, the Chönyid Bardo (chhos-nyid bar-do) and therefore controlling the entire rebirthing process.

Calm Abiding – Clear Light of Mind

Within the calm abiding, when you seed questions then impressions can come by way of answers and so you are educated. These are normally quite quick and fleeting, which is the nature of anything manifesting via the higher domains. Lightning-quick is the enlightened Mind. Astral plane images by contrast happen slower ('normal speed') because there is more 'substance' involved, allowing colour and sounds to be better registered in the mind. They then need to be appropriately interpreted. Because of the nature of the substance, the images can be easily distorted by the desire-mind or by extraneous agents. In calm abiding meditation such distortion does not happen, (unless the individual is too self-focussed) but the dark brotherhood (DB) can sometimes briefly intercept. Much more intuited information can be given at 'lightning speed'. The path to enlightenment consists of training in listening to and interpreting such near-instantaneous impressions. Vipassana for instance is a generalised term trying to convey this type of awakened Mind. Dzogs Chen is another, it is the attainment of the Clear Light of Mind. You can see here this mode of training in your present mind, and are also aware of the times when sluggishness or an obscured mind and its delusiveness appear. The objective of course is to totally eliminate any tendency to delusiveness, to have the Mind totally perspicuous, awake radiant, being resident in its natural state, which in the Zen tradition is Za-Zen. Your practice this is the clarification of mind into Mind by eliminating the baggage train of impediments that cloud normal thinking, specially for those that have good rational minds. Abiding in the natural state of Mind then concerns the attainment of *siddhis*, though one is not necessarily then a *siddha*, a Master of all phenomena. For that there are yet a few additional steps to travel.

Tension in Relation to Śūnyatā (Esoterically Understood)

In this subject of **'tension'** as it is esoterically understood lies the heart of gaining the *śūnyatā* experience. In essence it is the key issue for all Buddhist meditators (and indeed for all wishing to gain liberation). I have explained it well enough in the pages you mentioned, but to achieve it is another story. You cannot achieve it with your personality **will**, an endeavour to hold your mind steady through use of your will.

Continuous **relaxation of the mind**, producing the Emptiness of the attributes of mind is needed. Tension is the dynamism of the Will that arises in Emptiness when the relaxed mind is focussed upon the task at hand. It is the intensity of the Energy of the Divine (from the Monad/Shambhala) surging through when there is no mind to interfere. Hence it necessitates the generation of the all-inclusive Mind that touches upon a subject and then lets go - to let what IS to manifest as it Must. The Mind then comprehends what has been experienced. An awakened One can reside at a point of tension (an esoteric version of what Physicists call a tensor-field) and therein sow a seed (*bīja*) in mantric sound to accomplish miracles upon the physical plane, but the expansion of the *bīja* must be directed by the Eye. When you can consciously reside at the *śūnyatā-saṃsāra* nexus, then you will comprehend what I mean by 'tension'. Yes, you are right, the emotions are the deadly enemy of being able to hold your mind steady in dispassionate Emptiness, and so you are **battling to control your kleśas**, and learning to be serene in your everyday activities and thoughts. *Kuṇḍalinī* awakening is necessary to be able to reside consciously in this 'tensor-field'.

Nevertheless, whenever you lose yourself in complete creative endeavour, i.e., say being absorbed in writing an important teaching to help someone, where you have lost consciousness of yourself, because your mind is poised in intent to give the best possible teaching. In the timelessness that you have experienced wherein the right thoughts have flowed into your mind to appropriately inspire the one you seek to help, then you have experienced a point to tension, with the 'tensor-field' being the outpouring of *dharma* you produced. An example for you may sometime be at the heights of inspiration when you receive your poetry. You see therefore tension and enlightened creativity are virtually synonymous. Sagittarius the archer fires the directed arrows of creative thought to their ordained goal through such tension. At this stage it is good if you can **hold** the mind steady in such a point of tension for relatively **brief periods**. That is accomplishment enough for the inspired work to be achieved. Working generally to produce serenity of mind at all times is the basis to be able to achieve the state of Tension when needed. Revelations through Tension will not come if the mind has not been seeded with a vast repertoire of esoteric knowledge of the subject concerned, this is needed for the Divine Will to impress the mind with attributes of Mind. For this reason you are studying the esoteric doctrines from my books. The knowledge provides the field wherein the Archer can work to fire his arrows of enlightenment.

Consequently as you cultivate the art of Tension in your striving to manifest 'error-free' activity through the relaxation of the attributes of mind, so you approach enlightenment.

I am thankful that you are at the stage where you felt the need to ask this question. Be not too ambitious, work at a steady pace. Many years will go in the process where you learn to appropriately empty your mind of the impediments to the tensed state of an enlightened One. Such a One residing at the *śūnyatā-saṃsāra* nexus will be able to see all directions in space and time at need.

Yesterday I explained somewhat the nature of 'tension' esoterically understood. I was explaining as much as I was able the nature of the 'tension' of enlightenment, but most people think of the lower form, where they tense up their minds to focus upon a specific subject.

Zen Mind - Pratyakṣa

Right timing generally manifests in terms of an inner Voice (*pratyakṣa*) telling you what is the next step, coupled with doorways of opportunity suddenly opening that will allow you to take the next step.

Instantaneous perceptiveness and response is the required mark of the Zen Master, and so your slower, formal mind is being transformed to think much faster, to intuition correctly. It takes time and considerable practice to sustain the Zen Mind.

The 'flashes of clarity', are also called flashes of revelation (the intuition esoterically understood, which I also call *pratyakṣa*), an aspect of insight meditation (*vipassanā*). Our monk brothers also practice a version of this form of meditation, which they call 'walking meditation', but in practice the meditation process can happen whilst you are doing your normal chores (in your case watching the video), where your consciousness is focussed inwards whilst actively engaged with *saṃsāra*. This is the way of the modern practitioner. All aspects of *saṃsāra* are used as a base to gain revelations. The texts speak of everything being intrinsically 'Empty', but that 'Emptiness' is really but a veil for flashes of timeless revelation, whose periods of experience continuously grow until the experience of such 'Emptiness' is the norm for your present existence. Emptiness here is considered as **absence** of what your mind normally accepts as the 'real' but in fact is the illusional, thus the 'flashes of clarity' manifest when that which sub-stands the illusionality takes its place. The *karma* (*saṃskāras*) from episodes of meditative ecstasy from former lives of yogic accomplishment then flash into your present mind and you experience this as the timeless insights of your present incarnation. It is but a continuation of the past into the present-future. Many think of *saṃskāras* in negative terms, but they are also the patterns of forces appearing in the now from wholesome activities, such as working to gain enlightenment in a past life. This ritual of enlightenment grows apace with increasing frequency as you walk the path to the higher Initiations, which are really the grades of the Bodhisattva *bhūmis* (stages). The ritual of enlightenment

continues with increasing intensity from life to life, until one life you are a Buddha walking on earth, preparing to traverse the far reaches of cosmos.

The images you receive need not be more than a flash, likewise with the spiritual clothing/armour you are wearing. Learn from the flashes of intuition, the quick impressions, images that come in your mind. Quickly deduce their source, if possible, and ward off any grey source with the projection of light. *Pratyakṣa* (non-conceptual and direct perception, intuition per se and non deceptive. Can refer to both the cognition that perceives an object and the object itself, a version of the term *buddhi*, in terms of the way it manifests) is what is here required for you to awaken. You will travel along the way to higher realisation through recognising valid cognitions that happen in a split-second in consciousness. Enlightenment consists in holding these 'valid cognitions' that penetrate the higher realms, the planes of liberation, for ever-longer periods of time. The intuitions can happen at any time, learn to recognise, reflect upon and cherish them, but they can also come from evil sources, so you need your sword.

Thinking Multidimensionally

The higher, '**quick flashes**' come from a higher plane of perception (the mental, or higher, rather than the astral plane), hence generally are seeded with much revelation. The problem however is that they quickly move out of consciousness, but as a meditator you are expected to meditate properly upon the impressions, and so develop your intuition/inner vision, enlightened Knowingness. The enlightened Mind is very **quick and fluid, and a series** of such flashes of revelation can tell you **more** than a astral movie image, once the meditation-Mind is functioning. The movie image form is similar to dreaming, where images are given that can be quite overlaid with DB thought-forms.

When you receive the 'flashes of revelation' in your mind, do not try to hold them for too long except maybe to try to clarify their meaning, and then commence to meditate upon the import of what you received. Such is the training along the road of becoming an enlightened being. An enlightened Mind must be able **to quickly interpret** a continuous stream of such 'flashes', hence to be able to **think multidimensionally**. The Initiate lives in two worlds simultaneously. How to achieve this then is your present training.

Discriminating Inner Wisdom

You must at this stage develop the discriminating Inner Wisdom of Amitābha. Hence formal seated meditation and *pratyakṣa* are needed. *Pratyakṣa* relates to Akṣobhya's Mirror-like wisdom.

By teaching and find skilful means in teaching others you developing some wisdom, in learning more about its expression through trial and error. You are driven by compassionate motives, and as your compassion drives you to act, so you manifest actions that teach you the right and wrong in terms of the correct action, hence you gain more wisdom. Emptiness arises in the spaces between the action, when you rest your mind totally, and from Emptiness arises Insight, which I have earlier related to the term *pratyakṣa*, which then evokes the wisdom to further act. Male/female – yin/yang always acting around the spaces of the Emptiness that is the Real. The sum of this interrelation is what makes you – You as an enlightened Being, or rather, your growth that way.

Clear Light of Mind

I have given you the teachings of learning to listen to *pratyakṣa* (or the intuition), but the process of being able to spontaneously grasp the gains of such listening, necessitates the awakening of the Clear Light of Mind (to which Govinda refers), and this is the path of passing Initiation testings, as your mental-emotional *saṃskāras*, that would distort the clarity of the impressions, must all be gone. One can learn the **methodology** given in the **Bardo Thödol** or the process of **zapping** away all DB influences, and for you the methodology presented is the latter, though a study of the general teachings in this book will be very useful.

That 'quick imagery comes and goes quite often but not many clear impressions' is also part of the training related to gaining an enlightened Mind, because in such an awareness impressions can come and go in microseconds, and the Mind instantaneously interprets and acts accordingly. Thus a vast amount of information can be provided in a short space of time. The dream interpretation process you are being educated in relates to the development of such an instantaneous intuitive Mind. This is also part of the Zen tradition methodology. Meditate upon the quickness of Mind that those that are purported to have been enlightened demonstrate in the stories of the Zen Masters.

Breathing Practice

Mindfulness of breathing is a quite useful practice of course, as long as it does not become obsessive and concretised (manifesting a fixation of mind), then it stifles spiritual progress and defiles the *nāḍīs*.

These exercises with meditation and breathing can partly help someone align his thought patterns correctly with his bodily mechanism.

To me your internal perceptions are going well. In your breathing forget the belly altogether, and bring the *prāṇas* from the chest to the Head centre. (The Zen focus at the Solar Plexus, taken as the centre of Power, called Hara I think, really relates to breathing via the Diaphragm centre, but most meditation instructors are not aware of this centre.) Link the Heart to the Head this way and let go of the Solar Plexus centre, as you have indicated you have done. So you move from the formed *rūpa lokas* to the *arūpa lokas* that way in your perceptions. Leave the desire-mind behind (the Solar Plexus centre), though it can be a starting point. When 'desire thoughts arise' allow them to pass through your mind, try not to suppress them, but analyse them for what they are and where they lead to. Once analysed appropriately then they will dissipate of their own accord, and so you continue with the main focus in your meditation. Always go with the flow of the energies released. They represent where you are at, at the present moment, hence can be transformed through **right comprehension** and then **direction** [to other *chakras*, minor ones, petals, nadis, eight directions, elemental direction, five wisdoms of Dhyāni Buddhas/*prāṇas*, psychological direction, 'space direction'].

Practising Prāṇayama without knowledge of the inner realms

Concerning your statement: 'I saw a monk sitting behind him in another meditation. I saw a gray hand on his back near his left shoulder', you were shown what is a normal happening in the meditations of many sincere meditators. They meditate, but have no knowledge of the inner realms they are contacting, hence their meditations are infiltrated by the grey forces of the DB. In this case the infiltration was via a small *chakra*, which alternately are called the Breast centres, or Shoulder blade centres. This also relates to his level of meditation experience, in this case meaning that he mainly focusses upon breathing (*prāṇayama*). At a higher level of meditation the grey attack will come via the back of the head, and will of course cloud, mark, the nature of the impressions. That the DB are interested in the meditations of this monk indicates that he is someone of relative importance, whose thoughts they wish to influence. Unfortunately most meditators are totally ignorant of such influences and so do not take any measures to protect themselves. Such ignorance stunts their abilities to gain enlightenment, or the true objectives of their

practice. You helped this monk for a certain esoteric reason known to the one giving you the vision. That you called the *deva* is very good, and you can also help with such healing with light from your wand. Afterwards the monk should receive the impression the invisible helper would have wished him to receive.

'Cosmic' Breathing Exercise – Karma Meditation

The teaching of breathing in karma and breathing it out is similar to *śamatha*, where one in breathing in pranas (of which there are five types) and holding them in a mirror-like awareness whilst observing their effects, and then breathing then out with the resultant insight (*vipassanā*) gained from them. Here the meditation is centred upon the **individual**.

In the karma meditation you are breathing in the five sense-consciousnesses of all the experiences in the world around, and after holding these awarenesses in your consciousness you breathe them out as a consequence of the insight (*vipassanā*) you have gained in such a way that those karmic strands will have dissipated, or else be converted into enlightenment-attributes. In this meditation you are not so much focussed upon yourself, but rather upon the **all-around**, of which you are a part, and from this perspective working to produce the peaceful effects of the *śamatha*, equilibrium, harmony in your surroundings and those you are involved with. In this way you and the all-around travel together as much as is possible.

There are many forms of karma, casual karma, such as talking to a stranger for a few minutes on a bus, incidental karma, such as having an odd meaningful conversation with someone at your saṅgha now and then, but nothing much comes from it. There is individual karma, which is what concerns most people. There is group karma, which is most important to consider, there is national, international and cosmic karma (such as what confronts a Buddha when he leaves a planet such as the earth).

In this form of *śamatha* you are a silent observer, watching the *saṃsāric* play all around you, the matrix of mental-emotional actions they are involved in. It is all a play (*līla*), and most take it as if it were all real, but in fact it is but their karmic interrelationships that keeps the illusion of it all moving. They can create new karma through willful volitions or live out the karma that is. You on the other hand, know of the unreality of the play and so will steer the play around you as much possible to a fitting conclusion, i.e., the cleansing the karma that is (inbreathing), and directing the happenings of the now towards enlightenment for all (out-breathing). All is based upon your contemplative observations. You learn to go desireless with the flow of the karma, good or 'bad', it all must be worked off appropriately. This form of *śamatha* takes much quiet observation, wisdom and skill in action. You ignore causal karma, all of that is but happenings on the periphery of the eye. Start with incidental karma, and see if that can be improved upon to a fitting conclusion. Look at group interaction pre-eminently, and the rightful part you play therein. Within that context

your *śamatha* practice proceeds. You think at first in terms of the 'I' the in and out-breathing of that karma, and then extend it to the group interrelation. Inevitably you will learn to spontaneously respond to every opportunity to breathe out that which rectifies group karma.

Concerning breathing in and out was meant to be an auxiliary meditation for you to practice. It is specifically directed for you who are practicing Buddhism. You are learning to awaken the attributes of the liberated Mind in your practice. The forte of Buddhism is its in-depth analysis of mind/Mind. It has some thousands of years head start here compared to the relative ignoramuses that call themselves psychiatrists.

Exercise

1. Breathing in you say 'I am not this body or the consciousness that relates to it. What is tangible is illusory'.

Breathing out you say 'That beyond the mind is the Real. The Real is not attached to form, but must command and so direct its purpose.'

2. Breathing in you say 'That purpose is the Real.'

Breathing out you say 'All is Empty (Void) and in that Emptiness the Sound of it all resounds.'

3. Breathing in then is 'Emptiness'.

Breathing out then is 'The Sound of what must be done.' It resonates the Knowingness of the spaces between breathing in and out, the Universality of the spaciousness of the Mind that is the All.

4. Breathing in then are the 'Sounds of the suffering ones, ignorantly obsessed'.

Breathing out then is the purposeful Plan to dispossess those sounds, so that they too can breathe in the Emptiness of what they are.

Introduction about Walking Meditation

Walking meditation is appropriate for getting good impressions. I often do this to further receive information once I have meditated on something. Seated meditation

is also needed to rightly focus your energies to the higher states of perception, and to build a rhythm of concentrated focus, but such sitting meditation need not be too long. Try to keep a correct deportment with respect to being inwardly focussed or receptive all of the time, to be aware of your consciousness and how it reacts to situations, and discussions with people around you. That way you can be inwardly guided and receive impressions quite frequently, and inwardly you should quickly be able to determine the meaning of such statements. This is the way of the enlightened Ones, which is what you are becoming. All of you are being observed and guided all of the time, and need to become more aware of this telepathic exchange between the observing Masters and you.

Walking Meditation Aura Bodhicitta Energisation

You can visualise a bright aura, by trying to bring in more intense light. However the radiance of the aura is created generally through the development of *bodhicitta* (service arenas), the refinement of *kleśas*, and the energisations that are obtained through high contact in meditation. Breathing practices are specifically valuable if accompanied by the above three, and when accompanying the right meditation. Other than that they can clog the *nāḍīs*, hence the aura, with the concretions of empirical and wrongly devoted thoughts. Breath is but an extension of thought, is it not? Therefore what is on the mind is imbued in the psyche. Dullness, not brightness may be the result. The DB also know how to breathe for their forms of empowerment. Of course the 'dullness' of a practitioner will normally be much brighter than an ordinary person, so everything is comparative. Breathing can be thought of as a *piṅgalā* function, in that it comes under the rubric of the development of wisdom. If properly taught with the appropriate *dhāraṇīs*, *yidams* [deity visualisation] and mantras upon the yogic path, then it is a *suṣumṇa* practice.

Walking Meditation (Thich Nhat Hanh, Happiness, Parallax Press, 2009. pp. 32-38)

The mind can go in a thousand directions.
But on this beautiful path, I walk in peace.
With each step, a gentle wind blows.
With each step, a flower blooms.

We walk all the time, but usually it's more like running. Our hurried steps print anxiety and sorrow on the earth. If we can take one step in peace, we can take two,

three, four, and then five steps for the peace and happiness of humankind and the Earth.

Walking meditation is walking just to enjoy walking. Walking without arriving, that is the technique. There is a Sanskrit word, *apranihita*. It means wishlessness or aimlessness. The idea is that we do not put anything ahead of ourselves and run after it. When we practice walking meditation, we walk in this spirit. We just enjoy the walking, with no particular aim or destination. Our walking is not a means to an end. We walk for the sake of walking.

Our mind tends to dart from one thing to another, like a monkey swinging from branch to branch without stopping to rest. Thoughts have millions of pathways, and they forever pull us along into the world of forgetfulness. “If we can transform our walking path into a field for meditation, our feet will take every step in full awareness. Our breathing will be in harmony with our steps, and our mind will naturally be at ease. Every step we take will reinforce our peace and joy and cause a stream of calm energy to flow through us. Then we can say, “With each step, a gentle wind blows.”

You can practice walking meditation anytime you walk, even if it's only from the car to the office or from the kitchen to the living room. When you walk anywhere, allow enough time to practice; instead of three minutes, give yourself eight or ten. I always leave for the airport an extra hour early so I can practice walking meditation there. Friends want to keep me until the last minute, but I resist. I tell them that I need the time. Walking meditation is like eating. With each step, we nourish our body and our spirit. When we walk with anxiety and sorrow, it's a kind of junk food. The food of walking meditation should be of a higher quality. Just walk slowly and enjoy a banquet of peace. A. J. Muste said, “There is no way to peace; peace is the way. Walking in mindfulness brings us peace and joy, and makes our life real. Why rush? Our final destination will only be the cemetery. Why not walk in the direction of life, enjoying peace in each moment with every step? There is no need to struggle. Enjoy every step you make. Every step brings you home to the here and the now. This is your true home—because only in this moment, in this place, can life be possible. We have already arrived.

The Earth is our mother. When we are away from mother nature for too long, we get sick. Each step we take in walking meditation allows us to touch our mother, so that we can be well again. A lot of harm has been done to mother earth, so now it is time to kiss the earth with our feet and heal our mother. Some of us may not be able to walk. When we practice walking meditation at our retreats, each person who can't walk chooses someone who is practicing walking meditation to watch and become one with, following her steps in mindfulness. In this way, he makes peaceful and serene steps together with his partner, even though he himself cannot walk. We who have two legs must not forget to be grateful. We walk for ourselves, and we walk for those who cannot walk. We walk for all living beings—past, present, and future.

Practice

When you begin to practice walking meditation, you might feel unbalanced, like a baby taking her first steps. Follow your breathing, dwell mindfully on your steps, and soon you will find your balance. Visualise a tiger walking slowly, and you will find that your steps become as majestic as hers.

You may like to start by practicing walking meditation in the morning, allowing the energy of the pure morning air to enter you. Your movements will become smooth and your mind will become alert. Throughout the day, you will find you have a heightened awareness of your actions. When you make decisions after walking meditation, you will find that you are more calm and clear, and have more insight and compassion. With each peaceful step you take, all beings, near and far, will benefit.

As you walk, pay attention to each step you make. Walk slowly. Don't rush. Each step brings you into the best moment of your life. In walking meditation, you practice being aware of the number of steps you make with each breath. Notice each breath and how many steps you take as you breathe in and breathe out. In walking meditation we match our steps to our breath, and not the other way around. When you breathe in, take two or three steps, depending on the capacity of your lungs. If your lungs want two steps while breathing in, then give exactly two steps. If you feel better with three steps, then give yourself three steps. When you breathe out, also listen to your lungs. Know how many steps your lungs want you to make while breathing out.

When you first start practicing, your in-breath is usually shorter than your out-breath. So, you might start your practice with two steps for the in-breath and three for the out-breath: 2-3; 2-3; 2-3. Or, 3-4; 3-4; 3-4. But later on it may become more even: 2-2 or 3-3. As we continue, our breathing naturally becomes slower and more relaxed. If you feel you need to make one more step while breathing in, then allow yourself to enjoy that. Whenever you feel that you want to make one more step while breathing out, then allow yourself to have one more step breathing out. Every step should be enjoyable.

Don't try to control your breathing. Allow your lungs as much time and air as they need, and simply notice how many steps you take as your lungs fill up and how many you take as they empty, being mindful of both your breath and your steps. The link is the counting.

When you walk uphill or downhill, the number of steps per breath will change. Always follow the needs of your lungs. Observe them deeply. Don't forget to practice smiling. Your half-smile will bring calm and delight to your steps and your breath, and help sustain your attention. After practicing for half an hour or an hour, you will find that your breath, your steps, your counting, and your half-smile come together easily.

After some time of practice, you will find that the in-breath and the out-breath will become closer in length. Your lungs will be healthier, and your blood will circulate better. Your way of breathing will have been transformed.

We can practice walking meditation by counting steps or by using words. If the rhythm of our breathing is 3-3, for example, we can say, silently, “Lotus flower blooms. Lotus flower blooms,” or “The green planet. The green planet,” as we walk. If our breathing rhythm is 2-3, we might say, “Lotus flower. Lotus flower blooms.” If we are taking five in-breaths and five out-breaths, we may say: “Walking on the green planet. Walking on the green planet.” Or “Walking on the green planet, I’m walking on the green planet,” for 5-6.

We don’t just say the words. We really see flowers blooming under our feet. We really become one with our green planet. Feel free to use your own creativity and wisdom to create your own words.

Every day, you walk somewhere, so adding walking meditation to your life doesn’t take a lot of additional time or require you to go anywhere different. Choose a place—a staircase, your driveway, or the distance from one tree to another—to do walking meditation every day. Every path can be a walking meditation path.