

Chapter 5: Simply Being Present While Walking

Plus a Special Section on Mindful Speech

Expanding Our Awareness in Meditation to Include Walking

Often people new to meditation see meditation as an activity that is done for a number of minutes either sitting cross-legged on a cushion or sitting on a chair. In reality meditation can be done sitting, standing, lying down, and as we will discover here, walking. The number of minutes one meditates can be as small as in a one- to three-minute STOP and PAUSE practice, or it can be longer as in sitting on a cushion or chair.

When I started, I almost universally sat either on a cushion or chair. On a winter trip several years ago I toured many southern states visiting friends wherever I went. Because there often were not chairs or space that worked for me to meditate, I experimented with meditating lying in bed before I got up. At first I was somewhat apprehensive because I thought I might just fall back to sleep. That ended up not the case. My meditation sessions before I got up were just as alert as when I sat in a chair. That was a surprise for me and a nice insight. Often people who have major body pain such as back pain will meditate lying down. It is just easier for them. For me, meditating while in the standing position works especially well too. In fact in that position I seem to be the most alert. If I am tired, that is always a good position. If I begin to meditate in the sitting position and then get sleepy, standing up to finish the meditation really works well. Being human, if we get sleepy in the standing position and then fall asleep, we will simply fall down. That is a great incentive to stay alert.

When doing walking meditation, everything we learned in Chapters 1 thru 4 applies. What is different is that our main focus of attention is not on our breath. Rather we focus our attention on the sensations in our feet and lower legs. I've had instruction on walking meditation from many different instructors, and they all have taught it slightly different. So, there is no totally right way to do it. The one thing in common is that the purpose of walking meditation is concentration—having our mind focused in one place.

Some instructors give instructions to walk slowly with high concentration on every sensation in the foot and lower leg as you raise your foot to take a step, lower and place your foot, put your full weight on that foot, and repeat that process for taking the next step with the other foot. There are many sensations involved with the process of walking if you are mindfully paying attention. Other instructors give instructions to simply be aware of the sensations in your feet and lower legs as you walk at a natural pace. So, there is no absolute right way to do walking meditation. Whether you move slow and deliberate or walk at a natural pace will depend on which way helps you be more concentrated and present.

Walking meditation is something that has been practiced at every meditation retreat I've attended. At retreats meditation sessions are typically 45 minutes in length, and they are usually somewhere between 9 – 12 sessions a day. To physically break up the sessions, walking meditation is alternated

with sitting. Every other session is walking meditation. In this chapter I will explain what one does while doing walking meditation at a retreat, as well as how to do walking meditation while you are walking in nature, walking from your car to the grocery store, from your bedroom to your bathroom, or from your house to your mailbox.

Walking Meditation

1. Walking Retreat Style (inside or outside)

This is an embodied knowing of walking – the intentional process of paying attention to the moment-by-moment experience of walking without judgment, and without trying to change or fix anything. Relax, receive and allow walking to be as it is moment by moment. Attention is centered in the feet and lower leg.

Before we begin, you might stand up and just focus your attention on your feet and lower legs as you stand. Notice what it feels like when your weight is on both feet. Feel your feet touching the floor. Feel your feet inside your socks/shoes. Then, lift one foot slightly feeling all the sensations as you lift. Feel the sensations when your weight is on one foot. Now set that foot back down and lift the other one. Feel all the sensations that presented themselves in that movement. What we are practicing is the concentration and awareness of all the sensations in our feet and lower legs as we walk lifting our feet and setting them down.

- At a retreat, you would select a spot to walk that is 20 – 30 feet long. It can be inside or outside. You then walk back and forth with the intention of keeping your focus on stepping. There is nothing to do and nowhere to go. The only purpose is concentration and focus. You can walk slowly paying attention to all the nuances of your foot movements, or you can walk at a more natural pace, whatever works best for you to maintain your focus. The purpose is being present with the movement of your feet and/or lower legs.
- If you use noting to help you maintain your focus, you might note, “right,” “left” or “step,” “step,” “step.” Your intention is to walk and know the felt or direct experience of each step. The concentration comes from the steady knowing of your making steps. If your mind wanders, you simply note that and then return to focusing your attention back to the knowing of stepping.
- Though the focus of walking meditation is mindfulness of sensations in your feet and lower legs, with a little practice you can also expand your awareness to include at the same time the breath, other body sensations, sounds, emotions, thoughts/thinking.

2. Walking in Nature

These instructions include walking in nature as well as situations where you are walking from one location to another (i.e. walking from your car to the grocery store, from your bedroom to your

bathroom, etc.) All that was said in walking retreat style above works here too. The exception is that here walking is typically done at a somewhat normal walking pace. Because you are outside, you may have many things that will awaken your senses and thus have many possible things to be aware of.

- In addition to being aware of the sensations in your feet and legs, you might have the direct experience of knowing:
 - + your breathing and how it changes as you walk uphill or downhill
 - + your arms swinging (or not)
 - + your body sweating (or not)
 - + your body sensations (tight or relaxed muscles, itching, etc.)
 - + the wind/breeze on your skin
 - + the feel of gusts of cool or warm air
 - + the felt sense of being in the sun or being in the shade
 - + and receiving data from the sense doors
 - eyes – see trees, birds, flowers, apples (note “seeing”)
 - ears – hear sounds of leaves in the wind, airplanes, birds (note “hearing”)
 - nose – smell skunk, drying leaves, scent of flowers (note “smelling”)
 - mouth – may be associated with smell or tasting anything you put in your mouth (note “tasting”)
 - skin – what touches your skin – wind, sun, nettles (note “feeling”)
 - mind – thoughts that come to your attention (note “thought” or “thinking”)

You might also note:

- + any judgment of good or bad
 - + the beginning and end of any of your experiences
 - + thoughts that arise regarding your experience – pleasant, unpleasant, neutral
 - + grasping and wanting an experience to last or the desire to end an experience and push it away.
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- One way you might consider walking a trail, taking a hike in the woods, or simply taking a walk on a road is to take maybe about 20 steps or so being very mindful of the sensations in your feet and lower legs. Then stop and mindfully notice what you see, hear, and smell. Then continue on repeating the walking and stopping. Or you might walk very mindfully for about 20 steps, then simply walk for a few minutes without the focused concentration, then walk again very mindfully for about another 20 steps. There is no exact prescription for how to do this. Do it the way it works for you. There is no goal other than as much as you can include mindfulness and presence into your walk.
 - Another possibility is to walk being aware and being in the moment as much as possible. When you find a bench or rock, sit down and close your eyes. Take a couple of breaths and check in with yourself. What sensations do you feel in your body? What do you sense in your surroundings—smells, sounds, sights, etc. What is your mood and state of well being. This is much like the STOP and PAUSE process.

- Once you become comfortable with walking meditation, you might find that it is an easy way to practice being mindful and being present almost anywhere. You might begin to automatically walk in presence from your car to the grocery store, from your bedroom to your bathroom, etc. Even taking a few steps mindfully will help build the muscle of your mind to be present.

In Summary

Walking meditation can be a marvelous way of helping you integrate mindfulness into your day or into your leisure activities. Being mindful with a concentrated focus any time during the day will enhance your ability to be mindful while you are sitting as well. It is not hard to do. The hard part may be remembering to do it.

Something for you to consider

Over the years I've adopted a few daily habits relating to being mindful. I offer for your consideration some phrases that I begin my days with and end my meditation sits with. Using your intuitive sense, if they feel right to you, try them out; if not, that is fine too. No pressure.

To start my day, I set this intention: (From Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk. This helps to set a daily intention.)

Waking up with a smile
24 brand new hours are before me
Vowing to live fully in the moment
Looking at all beings with the eyes of kindness and compassion

To end my sits, I set this intention: (This comes from my Zen days.)
Greed, anger, and ignorance arise endlessly, vowing to cut off the mind road
Dharma gates are countless, vowing to wake to them all
Buddha's way is all embracing, vowing to follow through

A special section on mindfulness of Speech

Language is very powerful. Language does not just describe reality. Language creates the reality it describes. – Desmond Tutu

Since beginning to study Buddhism and to meditate, concentrating mindfulness on two areas in particular have impacted how I experience my life and how I've integrated mindfulness into my daily life. For me, enlightenment or awakenings have not come in waves of instantaneous knowings. They've come over time and continue to grow in moments of awareness. Two special areas for me have been awareness of the body and awareness of speech. Both areas have quieted me down to notice the reality of the moment helping me respond to my life rather than to react to it.

As I worked with mindfulness of body and speech, I stopped trying and striving to change my life. I stopped trying to change how I was. I both stopped trying to become someone better and different from what I was, and I stopped trying to rid myself of ways I wanted to get rid of. Stated another way, I stopped trying to make myself more or less than what I was. That didn't mean I didn't have aspirations for being a certain way. I just began to use mindfulness to help me migrate to a new way of being. (See "Growing a New Skill is a Process" in Chapter 3, Part III). I began to see that the striving and struggling to change that I had done in the past didn't really work all that well. The striving created a lot of judgment and struggle. Setting goals just seemed to be a set up for failure. I finally learned to let go and get out of my own way and allow my life to unfold—albeit mindfully. "To just be" required a lot of letting go of control. My progress in changing to a new and wholesome way of being provided a more easeful way of being and it also sped up the process of becoming the person to which I aspired to be.

All four chapters up to this point have emphasized mindfulness of the body. Here I present some very simple things we can be mindful of around the area of speech. Over time, just these few things have the potential for enhancing all your relationships. They surely are something to "play" with. To begin I offer this quote about skillful or right speech from Jack Kornfield, teacher at the Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, California.

"If we could do just Right Speech we would change our lives, we would change the world, and we would become enlightened. Just in that. 'Enlighten' means awaken to what we do and what's true, because to speak truly means that one has to touch one's heart, one has to listen to it, one has to be there. Then all the rest of what one calls The Path with Heart follows from that."

1. The first area you might consider playing with is mindfulness of these four words—should, why, but, and disagree:

Should. It is a fine and perfect word to use as in this example, "When I mix Particle A with Particle B, I *should* get Result C. When should is used to refer to how a person is, is where we get into trouble. For example, "You should be this way," or "You should have done that," or "This is what you should believe." Used in this way it can be seen as a put down or shaming.

A simple solution – Replace *should* with *could*.

In mindfulness, know you *intention* in using the word prior to using it. Intention can sometimes be seen even in the tone of your voice

Why. Like should, *why* can be a fine and perfect word to use. For example, if you are working on a procedure, and things did not work out the way you expected, you may ask, “why?” If you use the word to refer to a person, as in “Why did you do that?” or “Why are you as you are?” you are asking the person to justify themselves. This could possibly be interpreted as shaming. The resolution is quite easy. When referring to a person, simply replace *why* with something like “What is your reasoning?” or “How did you come to that conclusion?” or “Help me understand your position.”

Again, in mindfulness know your *intention* in using the word prior to using it. Again, be mindful of tone of voice.

But. *But* is what we call an erasure word. It always erases what you say before it. The person then is left with what you say after the word. For example, has anyone told you, “I love you, but. . . .” You likely would not hear the “I love you,” and only remember what was said after it. There are times when you want to erase what you say in front of the word *but* as in “Sail boat for sail, but like new.” In that case, you want the person to remember and be left with the words that come after the word, but.

The solution – Mindfully only use the word *but* when you *intentionally* want to erase what you say in front of it. To not erase what you say in front of it, change *but* to *and* or simply eliminate the word *but* altogether. This may not be as easy it sounds. I assure you that the mindful use of the word *but* will impact your relationships in a positive way!

Disagree. I can imagine that there are situations where this word can be used for sake of emphasis, and successfully, but (and I’m using *but* consciously here) I’ve chosen to eliminate it from my vocabulary. When you say “I disagree,” what most people hear is that you are saying they are wrong, and that you are right. In an argument, it can have the impact of putting the other person in a position to justify themselves. It may even put you in a position of proving you are right. Depending on the tone of voice it may be seen as an attack on the other person’s point of view. The word *disagree* causes separation.

The solution is so simple – Simply replace disagree with, “I see that differently.” This will likely not be seen as an attack on the other person or their views. Again, be aware of your *intention* before you say your words.

If you are in a situation where you are having a conversation with a person discussing views in which you are diametrically opposed, here’s an approach to consider. Start by encouraging the other to talk. Set an intention for yourself to *listen to understand* the other’s position. Listening to understand is not equated to agreeing! You can even offer feedback to help the other know that you understand or you may ask questions for clarification. Once you have proven to the other that you can listen and that you understand their view, you are now in a position to interject, “I see that differently,” or “I have another view.” “Would you like to hear it?” If they respond with a “yes,” proceed. If they respond with a “no,” do not share your view. Having such a conversation requires letting go of control of the outcome. Consciously letting go of control will help keep you from entering react mode.

Pause. One breath can change what you say next.

– Oren Jay Sofer, insight meditation teacher and author of *Say What You Mean*

2. The second area to play with when speaking is to mindfully make sure that everything you say fits these four criteria:

is what you say **true**

is what you say **kind**

is what you say **useful**

and is what you say **timely**.

Where does gossip fall into this?

If you are at work, where does casual conversation at the water fountain fall into this?

Where does saying or repeating something that which you are not sure of fall into this? How about sharing information on the internet?

How does self talk fit into this picture?

How does speaking facts vs thoughts (assumptions, opinions, interpretations, judgments, beliefs) fit into this topic? Use some form of the following:

I *assume* that . . .

My *opinion* is . . .

My *interpretation* is . . .

I'm *judging* that . . .

My *belief* is . . .

How does listening fit into this topic?

Listen with the ears of your heart

Now here is my secret. It is very simple. It is only with one's heart that one can see clearly. What is essential is invisible to the eye. – Antoine De Saint-Exupery, French writer, poet, and journalist

Know your intention when talking!

Different folks have different personalty styles—some think out loud; others think before they speak.

Working with right speech will likely slow your speaking down. Speaking becomes more deliberate.

3. A third area to play with is to use this template to resolve conflict.

Integrating mindfulness/awareness of speech into conflict resolution

Template for Conflict Resolution:

To start – Prepare for talking out a conflict. Do your homework (Steps 1 thru 4) before talking the situation over with the person(s) with whom you have the conflict. Then, have the talk (Step 5).

Step 1: Script

Write the *script* of your story line describing the issue (what your self talk is telling you.)

Step 2: Facts vs Thoughts

Using the script in Step 1, separate *facts* from *thoughts*.

Facts: (provable; things all parties see the same way)

Thoughts: (assumptions, opinions, interpretations, judgments, beliefs – things that you see through your filters; the others may see these same things differently as they view them differently through their filters)

Rephrase thoughts listed in Step 1 as:

I *assume(d)* that . . .

My *interpretation* is/was . .

My *opinion* is. . .

It is my *judgment* that. . .

My *belief* is. . .

Notice the thoughts in your *mind*. Are they expansive or constrictive? *I* centered or *other* centered?

Note any issues or views to which you are tied; what attachments do you have?
Identify any SELF identities.

Step 3: Feelings/Emotions

To make listing feelings easy, circle the words on the two lists below to indicate what you are feeling. If what you are feeling is not on either of these lists, simply list it at the bottom after the word, *Other*.

Here are the words we used to describe feelings in class.

Mad/Anger	Glad
Sad	Joy/Happy
Hurt	Generous
Fear	Grateful
Disappointed	Courageous
Anxious	Compassionate
Guilt	Contented
Shame	Forgiving
Greedy	Delight
Frustrated	Contented
Bored	Peaceful
Restless	Satisfied
Impatient	
Depressed	

Feelings and Emotions (taken from psychologenie.com/feelings-list-of-feelings)

A adored admired amused adventurous affectionate aggressive anxiety accused agitated apprehensive

B beautiful befriended beloved blissful brilliant bitter betrayed broken blue bored

C calm capable care charmed cheerful cheapened criticized competitive clueless cowardly

D delightful deserving definite dramatic diplomatic disorganized disappointed dumb dominated difficult

E easy efficient elegant energetic excited egoistic envious evil exploited eccentric

F faithful friendly felicitous fortunate freedom fearful forsaken ferocious frustrated fanatical

G gentle glad gleeful graceful glamorous greedy guilty grief grumpy gray

H happy heroic humble honored hopeful hatred hysterical helpless horrified humiliated

I imaginative important impressed innovative innocent ignorant irritated irrational indifferent insulted

J jovial juiced jazzed jolly jumpy jinxed jealous judgmental jeopardized jittery

K kind knowledgeable kidded known kindhearted kept away kicked around knocked out knackered knotted

L laughable lifelike liberated love lucky lethargic lazy lonely let down lost

M marvelous merry magical mischievous mellow manipulated materialistic miserable mistreated misunderstood

N natural noble noticed needed neutral nonexistent nasty negative neglected nervous

O obedient optimistic opportunistic overwhelmed orderly obsessive offended overworked outrageous opinionated

P pretty perfectionistic pleasant passionate prosperous paranoid pushed away panic petrified proud

Q qualified quiet quick quashed quiescent quizzical quirky querulous quaint quixotic

R radiant ravished realistic reasonable reassured revengeful ridiculed rage rude rowdy

S sacrificial sanctified satisfied selfless shy scared shocked skeptical sarcastic selfish

T talented thoughtful talkative thrilled trusted terrified threatened tired tortured trapped

U unaccepted unappreciated unburdened unpleasant unconcerned unreal uplifted uncomfortable unknown useless

V vacant vague vain valued vexed vicious victimized victorious violated vivid

W warmhearted warned wasted wary weak wild willful wishful worthy wounded

Y and **Z** yearning yellow youthful zany zealous

Other:

Notice the **typography** of your feeling(s). Where are the feelings located in your **body**? Notice things like tightness, breathing rate, heart rate, etc.) Consciously embrace and feel all the nuances in your body of what you are feeling.

Step 4: Needs/Wants

Abraham Maslow introduced the concept of human needs in his “Maslow’s hierarchy of Needs.” He listed at the base physiological, and then moved up the scale to safety, love/belonging, esteem, and finally self-actualization. Our needs are what drives our wants.

Now, Have a Coffee Talk

Step 5: Actions

By completing Steps 1 thru 4, you have brought personal awareness to your situation. You can now speak coming from integrity—from your reality. You have positioned yourself to talk and respond to the situation rather than simply reacting from past habits and conditioning. If the other person(s) has also completed the steps, you can sit down over tea or coffee and walk through your template step by step. If the other person has not completed the above template, you will at least be able to come to the table being more clear on your view(s) of the situation. Having done your homework will also give you confidence.

Two things will be important for you to have a successful conversation.

1. *Consciously know your intention* for talking. This is more and likely different from “I’m going to get my way.” It may be something like, “We are talking to understand the situation and come to an agreement on what to do and how to proceed,” or “I want to talk this out in order to build and/or maintain our relationship.”
2. It is always important to remember that you can only control what you do and say. You have no power to control how the other will either react or respond or how they will receive what you have to say. *To have peace, you will need to give up complete control of the outcome.* Hopefully at the end of your conversation you will be in a space to continue Step 5 by stating actions (what you want to see happen now). This could be anything like taking on some agreed upon actions, just continuing the conversation at some future date, or to part ways.

Actions (what do you want to see happen now that you have talked)

Homework

1. Sit (Experiential Knowledge)

Aim to meditate 6 out of 7 days for an amount of time that works for you. I invite you this week to challenge yourself to add 5 or 10 minutes to the regular amount of time you sit. Now, experiment with walking meditation. It is okay to substitute walking meditation for sitting meditation.

2. Study (Intellectual/Cognitive Knowledge)

ReRead/Review Chapter 5 as it meets your needs

Read Chapter 6 “Putting It All Together and Going Forward”

3. Integrate (Daily Life Practice) (Experiential Knowledge)

- Every day continue to STOP and PAUSE as many times as you remember to take a few breaths and “check in” with yourself—an in-the-body experience. Integrate all that we’ve played with over the past six weeks—awareness of your breath, body sensations, feelings/emotions, thoughts/thinking, walking meditation, mindfulness of speech. Simply stay awake. What you encounter in life will be your teacher.
 - Awareness of your body when feeling both difficult and positive feelings/emotions
 - Notice intuitive hunches/gut feelings-list-of-feelings
 - Notice your body when you are having conversations with friends
 - Awareness of when a thought turns into thinking
 - Awareness of fact vs thoughtful
 - Awareness of the use of words such as “should,” “why,” “but,” “disagree”
 - Conscious use of RRAIN
 - Notice 1st and 2nd arrows (pain and/or suffering)
 - Notice if you have created any self identities
 - Notice any situation where you are reminded of impermanence
 - Notice awareness at the sense door level—just see, hear, touch, taste

- Now that you have nearly completed this mindfulness meditation class, consider taking this free 3-minute mindfulness test. As you read the questions, see if you can relate them to the topics we discussed in class. Your score will be automatically calculated. There's no need to judge your score good or bad. Simply view the results as useful information. Building any skill is a process. Use this link to access the test:
https://cloudsangha.co/test?utm_source=jack&utm_medium=affiliate&utm_campaign=May_email&mc_cid=135962a3ed&mc_eid=f81fb352f0
- Listen to this talk on dana (generosity offering)

When you registered for the class, the detailed information about the class stated “The class is freely offered. There is no charge. Participants are invited to give a free will, generosity offering (in meditation circles, this is known as ‘dana’) to the teacher and/or AUMC.”

The Buddha did not start teaching new students by teaching them how to meditate. He started teaching them things like generosity, loving kindness and compassion. These qualities help create a mindset where meditation is possible. From this audio session learn about mindful, skillful giving. Mindfulness of giving is much deeper than just deciding to give and how much or deciding not to give. This talk is given by Kim Allen, teacher at the Insight Meditation Center in Redwood City, California. Listen to this talk and use your awareness and intuitive sense to help you know what is skillful for you in terms of giving. Is it skillful for you to give something, or not? The link below will get you to the talk.

<https://www.audiodharma.org/playables/search?query=Dana>

Kim's talk is one hour long. The first half is a silent meditation with the second half hour being the talk. Take in the part(s) of the talk that work for you.

If you decide to offer a donation,

Next week you can place cash in a basket that will be provided,

or If you give by check, make checks payable to AUMC, and in the memo space in the bottom left corner, write “meditation,”

or If you wish to give online, go to the allendaleumc.org/meditation site and click on the button provided for donations.

If you decide that making a donation is not skillful for you at this time, consider making an offering in kind—stop in at an animal shelter and pet a cat, volunteer a few hours at a food pantry, take an elderly person to shop for groceries. . .

A heartfelt, “Thank You!” All donations will be split 50/50 with David and Allendale United Methodist Church.

- **Here's Something to Ponder Over The Next Week; Something to Walk and Play With.**
We will talk about this in class next week.

Situation(s):

You are at a party. Across the room you see some friends you want to talk to, so you walk up to them.
or

You are at work and you are walking to a meeting; you enter the room where the meeting is being held.
or

You are walking in the woods, and you notice a beautiful rock on which to sit, so you sit down.
or

You just entered a church to attend the funeral of a dear friend.
or

You approach your garden to dig potatoes.

As you either meet your friends, enter the room for your meeting, sit on the rock, attend the funeral, or dig potatoes, you say to yourself,

"Here I am, and I brought my body and my mind with me."

**Question – What did you mean? What is the significance of what you just said to yourself?
How might saying this impact what you are about to experience?**

- Six questions:

Meditation can be seen as a practice of self love. Please explain.

What does it mean to be whole. Please explain

We don't meditate just for ourselves. Please explain

We don't meditate just to become good meditators. Please explain.

The hardest place to become enlightened may be in a monastery. Please explain.

May all beings be free. What does that phrase mean?