

# Walking Meditation

For formal walking, choose a lane of about twenty steps in length and walk slowly back and forth along it. In daily life, walking meditation can also be very helpful. A short period—say ten minutes—of formal walking meditation before sitting serves to focus the mind. Beyond this advantage, the awareness developed in walking meditation is useful to all of us as we move our bodies from place to place in the course of a normal day. Walking meditation develops balance and accuracy of awareness as well as durability of concentration. One can observe very profound aspects of [practice] while walking, and even get enlightened! Walking meditation consists of paying attention to the walking process. If you are moving fairly rapidly, make a mental note of the movement of the legs, “Left, right, left, right” and use your awareness to follow the actual sensations throughout the leg area. If you are moving more slowly, note the lifting, moving, and placing of each foot. In each case you must try to keep your mind on just the sensations of walking. Notice what processes occur when you stop at the end of the lane, when you stand still, when you turn and begin walking again.

Do not watch your feet unless this becomes necessary due to some obstacle on the ground; it is unhelpful to hold the image of a foot in your mind while you are trying to be aware of sensations. You want to focus on the sensations themselves, and these are not visual. For many people it is a fascinating discovery when they are able to have a pure, bare perception of physical objects such as lightness, tingling, cold, and warmth. Usually we divide walking into three distinct movements: lifting, moving, and placing the foot. To support a precise awareness, we separate the movements clearly, making a soft mental label at the beginning of each movement, and making sure that our awareness follows it clearly and powerfully until it ends. One minor but important point is to begin noting the placing movement at the instant that the foot begins to move downward.

Abstracted from *In This Very Life: Liberation Teachings of the Buddha* by Sayadaw U Pandita

