

Walking instruction

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One of the, I think of it as one of the core slogans of our insight, meditation, tradition or scene is if it's not simple, it's not *vipassanā*.

It's such a simple slogan.

If it's not simple, it's not *vipassanā*.

So you want to track yourself a little bit to make sure you're not making it more complicated than it needs to be.

And there is a way of understanding awareness then awareness is really simple.

Sometimes I've translated mindfulness as noticing, because mindfulness now in this modern world has become something very sophisticated.

All kinds of ideas what mindfulness is, but noticing is still simple.

Just notice.

Just notice what's happening in the present, in the simple way.

And what's said to be another slogan is that that mindfulness is actually quite easy.

Mindfulness is easy.

What's difficult is remembering, and that's where the continuity is, the remembering, the staying close to that.

If you're riding a bicycle and you have to go uphill, a steep hill, you have to make continuous effort, and probably your mental effort to make physical effort also is quite strong, can be quite strong if you're tired and it's exhausted and you just have to keep pushing and pushing.

If you're biking downhill, and it's steep, but just steep enough that it's nice, you don't have to pedal at all.

And you have to be attentive to the momentum, to the experience, and it's a whole different way of being there.

Some people identify a lot with the effort.

Some people identify with the momentum of being carried along.

They're both important.

And so when we do a walking meditation, there is there the effort to walk.

And some people then pile on even more effort to walk in a very special way, to walk carefully, to walk.

And the effort translates to how they, the technique they're doing.

Now they're going to apply their mind a certain way, apply it to a certain part of the body.

And some people identify very strongly with that.

That's what they think it's all about, is them as the efforer.

Some people don't believe in effort.

Some people believe that somehow it's just grace.

It's just being done for you and you just have to trust very deeply.

And if you trust too deeply, your mind can wander off too easily.

So how to bring these two together in walking meditation?

How to keep it simple?

And one way is to consider that the effort we make is the effort to remember.

Remember what?

Remember that there is a natural kind of equivalent of momentum.

There's a natural wakefulness in our whole system.

René Nez talked about the whole body being nourished every cell by our breathing and oxygen.

Just about every cell, maybe, or most of them throughout the body, is also touched by nerve endings.

And a lot of those nerve endings that spread across our body turned on, turned on to receive the stimulus that comes from the world.

You don't have to make an effort to do it, except maybe to be attentive, to be open, to be awake, too.

All the different sensations that come in.

And that's kind of the momentum, that's the natural energy emergence of sensations, the natural emergence of experience.

And so rather than remembering to make effort to be mindful, make the effort to remember, to remember the body, to remember to be present in the body for the natural emergence of sensations, and in a certain kind of way, the natural emergence of knowing, maybe a verbal knowing, maybe a silent knowing, the real knowing, the acute clear knowing of what's happening in the moment, that's not going uphill.

It's almost appreciating that the mind knows without being told to.

So with walking then, it helps if you walk back and forth or a walkway that's about 20 or 30 steps long and simply walk back and forth.

And to begin with a pace that gives you a sense of ease, a pace which is easy for you, simple for you, that's nice for you.

And depending how you feel, that might be slow, stroll.

It might be a really fast, vigorous walk.

If there is a lot of anger and fury that needs somehow to not be contained too much, something, a lot of energy, walking fast is allowed too.

Just don't do it in the walking hall, and don't do it close to people who are walking slow.

You might frighten them.

But you find a pace that seems appropriate for you, that's in harmony with how you are at any given time.

And then, and harmony also means it then begins to allow for... the natural emergence of sensations, and maybe of knowing.

The natural way in which this whole system, our whole human system has evolved to be aware.

And we have a lot of different capacities for to be aware with.

And the key one we use in *vipassanā* is our sensations, aware of the sensations that are arising.

So as we walk, it can be nice to just be aware of much of the body as a wide field of sensations.

What that means will vary from day to day, walking period from walking period, depending on all kinds of things.

Sometimes you might be more aware of your chest or your belly or your shoulder or the movement of the arms or the legs and just kind of you kind of just start walking in the easy way and just kind of feel the natural way in which your body is revealing itself to you, how it appears.

And then as you settle in, allow your center of attention, center of attention to be in the part of your body where there's the greatest movement.

And there's a lot of movement as you walk, so it's really a kinesthetic kind of experience, somatic experience.

But the greatest movement is in the legs, and maybe the feet as they walk, and the lower feet, the lower legs.

And now there's a rhythm there of lifting and stepping and alternating between one leg and the other.

And there's something very nice about things which are cyclic or rhythmic.

As a place for attention to rest.

And there's a reference point that maybe is helpful for some of you, like watching the waves on the, washing up against the sand on the beach, or watching the water flow on a river, just walking.

So that kind of loose, relaxed gaze, that kind of just follows something that's moving and shifting ever so slightly, can be used to tune into the flow of sensations, the unfolding, the movement, the wave of sensations that come into play as your foot moves through space, lifting and moving and placing.

There's all this play of sensations that come and go and alternate.

And there is a way in which if you just remember, if you stay there, open the, kind of like open the door or the window, the breeze from the outside will come and brush your face.

If you stay awake to the sensations, open the door windows to your feet.

Remember to keep those doors open to feel and sense.

Take it all in.

Sometimes I think of the feet as sponges for sensations.

And what I'm trying to convey here is don't be in the control tower.

Boring down, directing the show, working to go uphill, bike uphill.

Rest, like you're resting on a bicycle seat that has momentum.

And feel the momentum of sensations, the momentum of present moment experience as it reveals itself to you, as it appears.

And stay there.

It's almost like it's carrying you.

It is the current in which you're floating.

It is the wind that's keeping your sail billowed out.

It is the wave that's walking, washing across the beach and wetting all the sand until the next one comes.

So as you walk, walk back and forth.

And if you're walking slow, it's kind of nice to just stop as you get to the end.

Mindfully turn around and stop and then start again.

There's something about that stopping, if you're slow enough, that can kind of, at a time, to refresh and to start over again.

Sometimes if you try to do this continuously, it's just too big of a goal.

But stop and start, and just for that pace across the 20, 30 feet, do it again.

Maybe keep your eyes down to about 45 degrees, and just be aware of seeing just enough that you know where you're stepping in a safe way.

But let everything be relaxed, everything be soft.

Be at ease as you walk.

Find an easy pace that's in harmony with how you are.

And if it helps you to use a note, a thought, to keep your mind from wandering off in thoughts, that it can be as simple as stepping, stepping, or it is awake.

Or the classic one is, in our tradition, is lifting, placing, lifting, moving, placing.

If you're going slow enough...

But the note is not that important.

The note is just a reminder to keep the window open.

A reminder to be available to the emergence, present moment experience that's always there.

And if you're new to IRC, then there's a walking hall right here where you walk the short distance.

You can walk in the hallways, you can walk in the community hall, you can walk... on the big beautiful rug we have down there.

But that's kind of a very creative piece of furniture.

All kinds of things happen there.

And then dining room maybe on the side, if it doesn't disturb anyone.

The decks, the parking lot, the grounds.

And so, and some people will do it in their rooms.

Some of the rooms are long enough to go back to do it within and that keeps them nice and focused sometimes.

So I hope you enjoy your walking and some of you have work meditation now.

You'll be going a little late too, so you might want to keep that in mind that you're to go there in a relaxed way, but promptly.

Thank you.

Hello.