



Walking Meditation

Diana St Ruth

Walking Meditation

Walking is a wonderful way of meditating. It brings one to the point of realising that meditation does not depend upon the position of the body. Sitting, standing, lying down, walking—what is the difference when one is aware? The state of being aware is an experience which goes beyond the body.

The formal practice of walking is very useful in retreat situations where a lot of sitting is taking place and the body gets stiff. To walk for ten minutes or so between periods of sitting, stretches the joints and can bring relief to aching knees, ankles and so on. But more than that, in a sense, walking meditation is like putting sitting meditation into motion. This can break down any misconceptions about meditation being something only to take place in perfect stillness.

Freedom from form, feeling, mental activity, perception and consciousness—this little bundle called 'me'—can be experienced at any time just by engaging in the business at hand in a meditative way, whether it be the rise and fall of the abdomen, or the placing of one foot in front of the other in walking meditation.

Stand upright and perfectly still.

Allow your arms to hang loosely by your sides.

Look at the ground far enough ahead to take your next step, but without studying what you see.

Concentrate on the body, the whole body, standing.

Notice the intention to raise one foot.

Place your attention on that foot.

Raise the foot a little and momentarily hold it there.

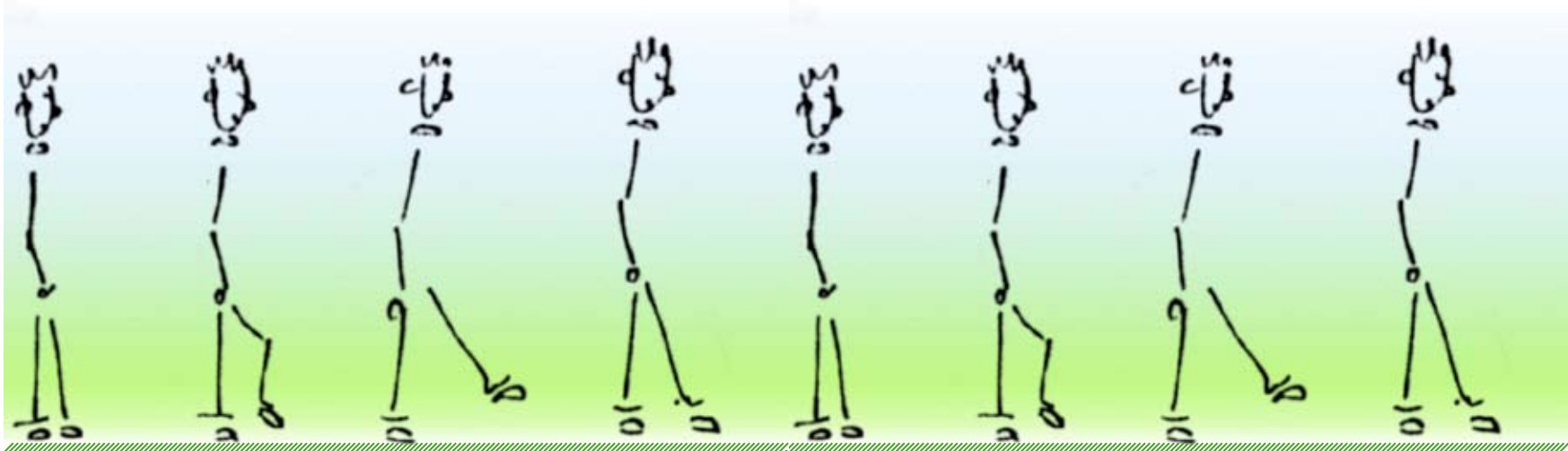
Notice the intention to move the foot forward.

Move it forward and hold it for a moment just above the ground.

Notice the intention to place the foot to the ground.

Place it to the ground.

Now repeat the process with the other foot.



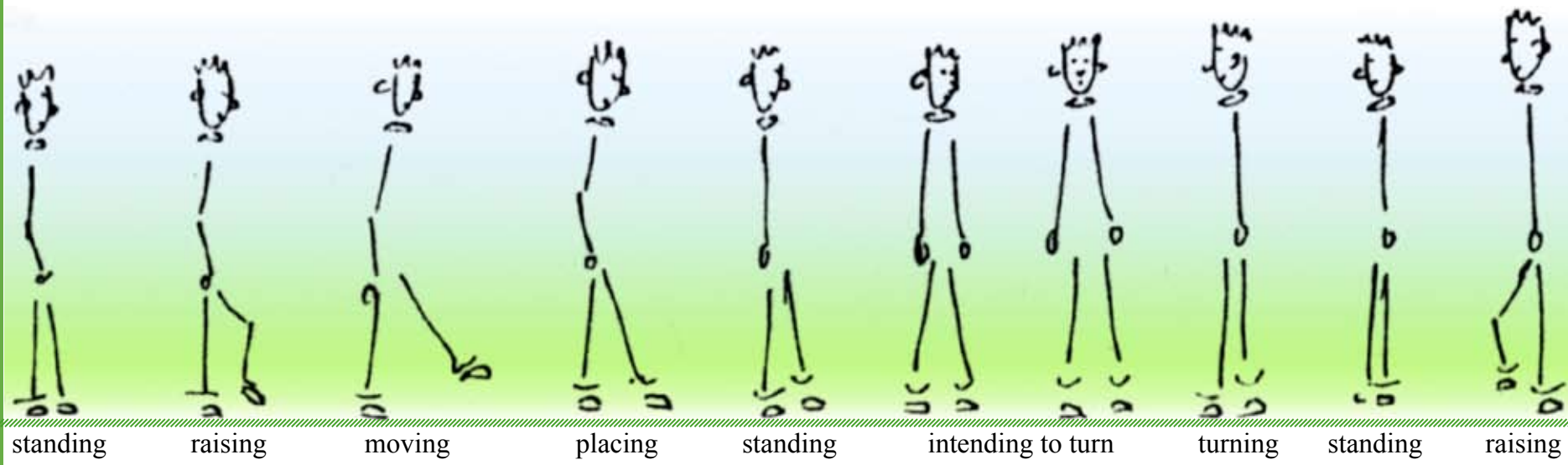
Persuade the mind to stay with the movements by reminding it what is going on. Say what is happening to yourself in the way that you might do, initially, in the sitting practice: 'Intending to raise, raising, intending to move, moving, intending to place, placing ...'

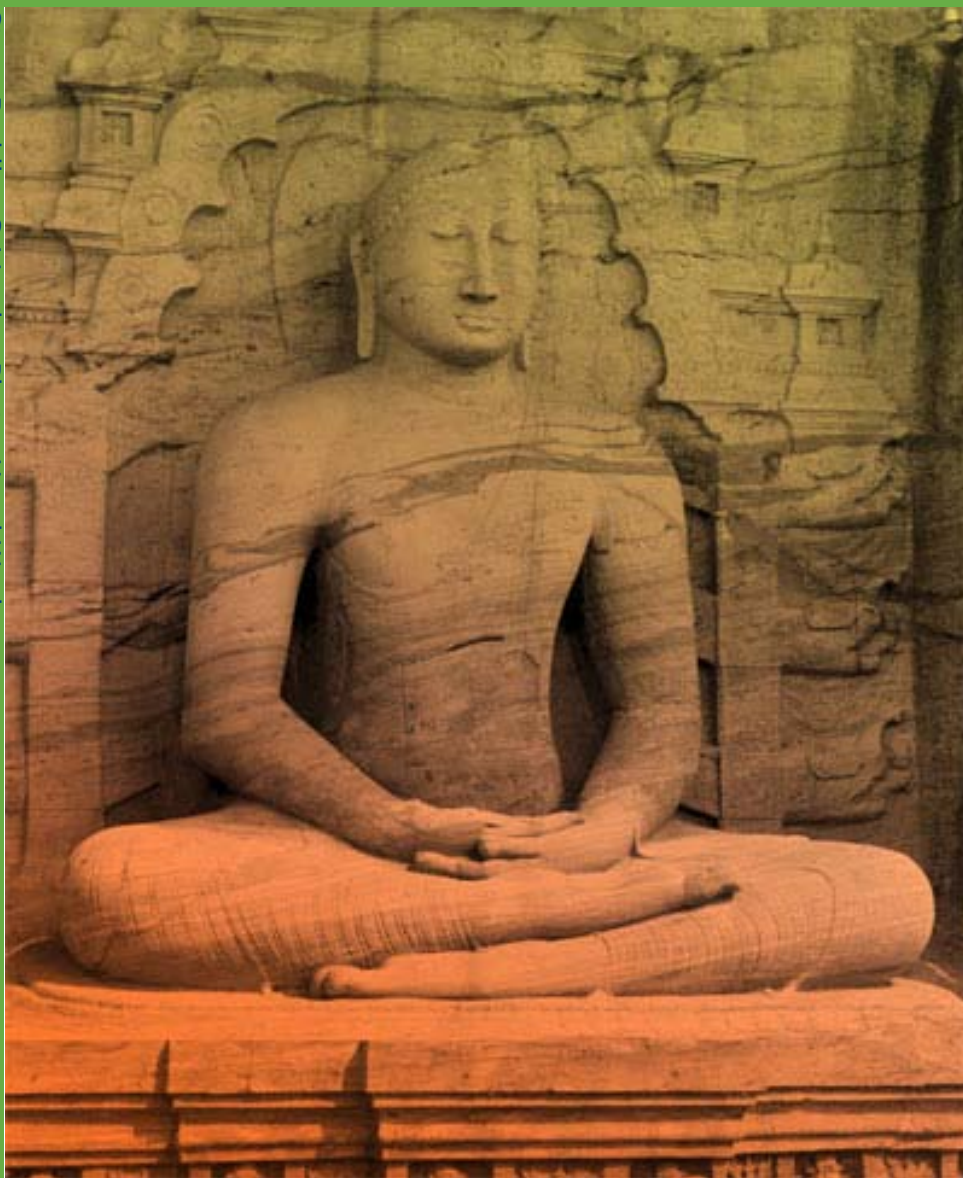
Continue walking for, say, fifteen steps, or until there is no more floor space. If the exercise takes place outside, find a suitable spot and limit the distance to about thirty steps, otherwise you could find yourself enjoying a lovely walk

somewhere, but not practising what you had intended.

At the end of the stretch of floor or path, stand for a moment or two. Be aware of the whole body standing. Be aware of the intention to turn. Notice that intention. And now turn slowly until you are facing the opposite direction. Now continue walking.

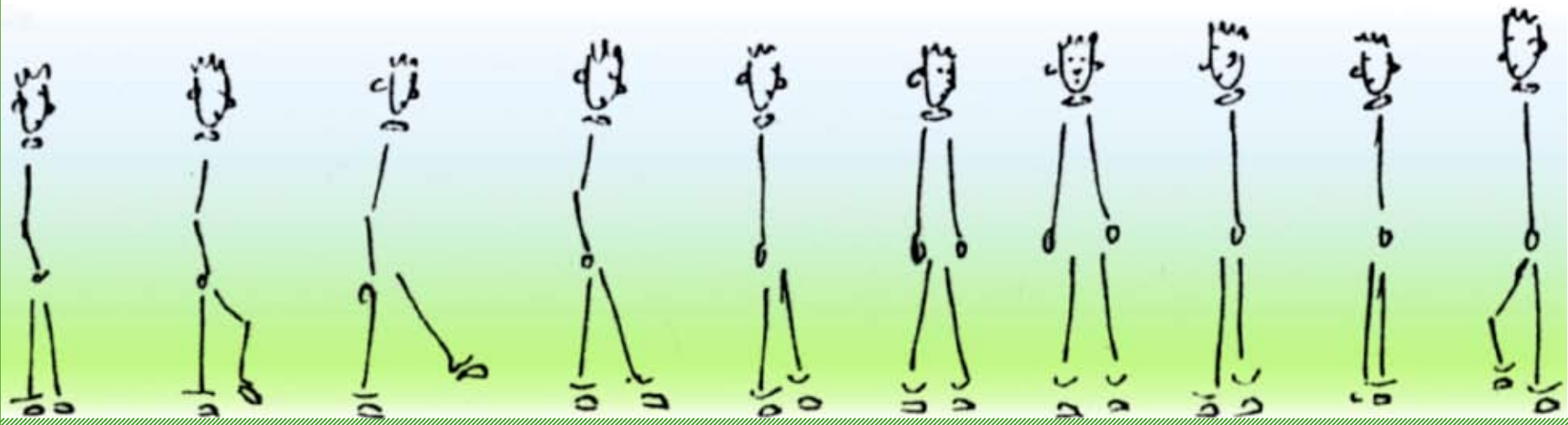
Practise walking up and down slowly for ten or twenty minutes.





In sitting meditation one point only is focused upon whilst acknowledging—acknowledging and immediately letting go—whatever arises mentally, physically or emotionally. In walking meditation, however, many movements are observed. Each is taken slowly and deliberately and concentrated upon. Whenever concentration is lost, stand for a moment, re-establish the concentration, and then continue.

There is no need to stop for every fleeting thought that crosses the clear space of your mind. Spontaneous thoughts, sounds, smells, the wind in your face, the pressure under your feet will appear and disappear in consciousness. Let them come and go as they please. Only if you become completely absorbed into some mind state, do you need to stop in order to allow the concentration to return to the body itself. Then continue walking.



'Standing, standing, standing, intending to raise (the foot), raising, intending to move (the foot), moving, intending to place (the foot to the ground), placing, intending to raise, raising, intending to move, moving...'

Just before turning to walk back again, stand for a moment: 'Standing, standing, standing, intending to turn, turning, turning, turning, standing, standing, standing, intending to raise, raising...'

Walking Meditation notes

Find a decent stretch of floor upon which you can take at least eight consecutive steps in a straight line (fifteen would be better), or locate a secluded spot outside somewhere.

Set a time for the exercise (ten or twenty minutes).

The arms are to hang loosely by one's sides, or gently held together in front or behind.

Stand perfectly still.

Lower the eyes to the ground to see just a few steps ahead, but without focusing on anything in particular.

Name the actions you take initially and then, when the inclination to stay with them is greater than the tendency to drift off into dreams, imaginings and thoughts of past or future, drop the naming and be aware simply of what is happening in an immediate and direct way. Feel the freedom of that!

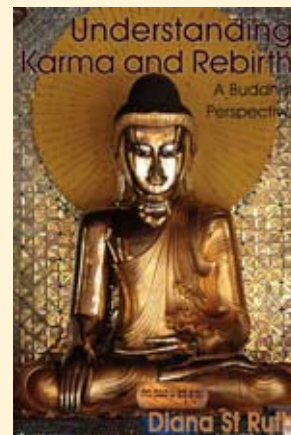
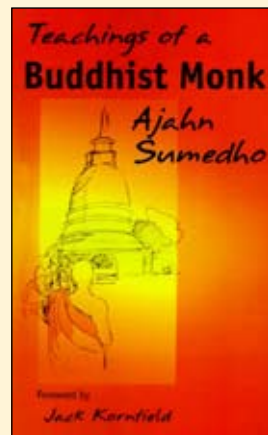
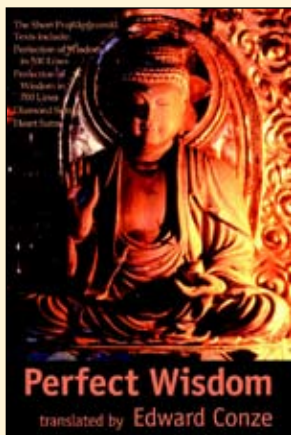
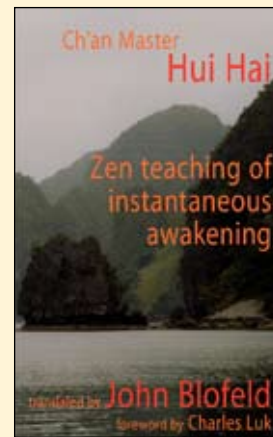
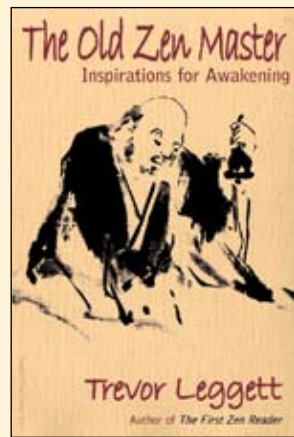
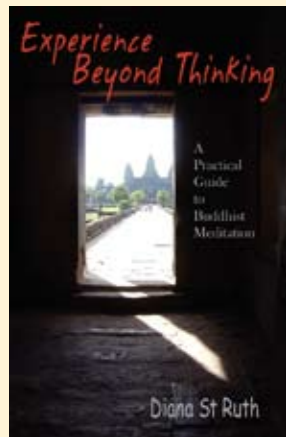
Extracts from

Experience Beyond Thinking

A Practical Guide to Buddhist Meditation

Diana St Ruth

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