

**Some words to use to describe sitting/walking meditation, the bell and bowing when there are new people:**

**Version I:**

Sitting Meditation: Sitting meditation brings us mindfully into the present moment, which is the only moment which we ever really have, as opposed to the past, which already has gone, or the future, which has yet to arrive. In sitting meditation, we concentrate on our breath. Breathing in, we are aware only that we are breathing in. Breathing out, we are aware only that we are breathing out. When our mind wanders, we gently, without judgment, bring our full attention back to the breath. We do this as many times as is necessary throughout the sitting period.

Walking Meditation: We do walking meditation for the same reason as sitting meditation: to bring ourselves mindfully into the present moment. In this case, however, we get off our cushion or chair so that we can move mindfully with our sangha brothers and sisters. In walking meditation, we walk for the joy of walking, without any “gaining” ideas. Some time their steps to their breath, such as one step per breath, or two or three. Some prefer to say gathas silently as they step, such as, "I have arrived" on one step and "I am home" on the next step. Some focus on the “feel” of their footstep as it touches the floor.

**Version II:**

We meditate to calm and nourish our body and mind, to stop their busy-ness; so that we can be clear and can look more deeply at ourselves and our world; so we can help. In the sangha we support one another to do this.

Our main tool is the breath. We pay attention to our breathing and allow everything else to slow down. When thoughts come, we notice and acknowledge them and continue to be with our breath—not influencing or changing it in any way, just simply being with it.

Walking meditation is harder in some ways than sitting meditation. We are moving, and still need to do everything else that we do when we sit in meditation. In another sense, though, it's easier, since each step provides a new focus. To aid our concentration we keep our eyes(which is where we are most easily distracted) cast down and relaxed, about three feet in front of us. There is really not that much for the eyes to do; our feet know well enough how to take small steps. Our arms hang relaxed by our side or we fold our hands in front of us. We touch the earth/floor with firm, gentle, careful steps. Thus, our body and mind work together in harmony.

We bow to acknowledge the Buddha nature, the essence, in each person and to express gratitude for the support we receive from one other. The bell is the voice of the Buddha calling us back to the here and now, asking us to be present with whatever is happening: the sangha opening, sitting meditation, walking meditation, and so on. When we listen with all our being to the sound of the bell, we are already meditating.

### **Version III:**

During sitting meditation we use our breath to bring our awareness into the present moment. By following our ‘in’ breath and ‘out’ breath, we begin to calm our minds. By nature the mind will wander and we will need to gently bring it back to awareness of the breath. We may start our session of sitting with one deep cleansing breath – breathing in deeply and then fully exhaling – which brings some freshness to our sitting. After the cleansing breath we then just allow our breathing to resume naturally without making effort in any way – and notice – “Breathing in, I know I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.” We can shorten this to “In...out...”.

When we practice walking meditation in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh, we walk as a community. We bring our awareness of our breath and our bodies up off of the cushion into the world and our larger community. We walk in a circle, mindful of the space between each other, and we move as a collective body around the room. Initially it may be easier to be aware of your body – your feet making real contact with the earth in a slow and intentional manner, arms relaxed at your side or clasped together in front of your body. If you’d like, you can continue the breath awareness you practiced on the cushion, taking one step on an ‘in’ breath, another on an ‘out’ breath.

It relaxes the mind more if you practice walking meditation with your eyes cast down, three feet or so in front of you. There is a series of bells that indicates transitions: mindfully rising to set aside our cushions, bowing to our fellow sangha mates, walking, stopping and returning to our cushions. Just watch those around you for cues as to what to do at each sound of the bell.

The bell is the voice of the Buddha, it is not an alarm. Upon hearing it, remember your True Nature and bring your awareness fully to what you are doing.

### **Version IV:**

Sitting Meditation: When we sit, we are practicing in and connected to the tradition of the Buddha. It was sitting at the foot of the Bodhi tree, breathing in and breathing out, that the Buddha attained enlightenment. It was his teaching for decades after to deepen awareness by breathing in and breathing out. And it was his teaching, too, to practice in community, to draw on the ground of sangha. So, here, tonight, as a community, we breathe in, we breathe out. Our posture is erect, returning to present moment. Thay’s gatha on the breath can help us to begin:

In, out  
Deep, slow  
Calm, ease  
Smile, release.

Present moment.  
Wonderful moment.

Walking Meditation: The Buddha was once asked, “What do your monastics practice?” He replied, “We sit, we walk, we eat.” Unsatisfied, the questioner continued, “But everyone sits and

walks, and eats.” And the Buddha told him, “When we sit, we know we are sitting. When we walk, we know we are walking. When we eat, we know we are eating.”\*

Walking meditation is an opportunity to walk, knowing that you walk. It is an opportunity to walk as a sangha, knowing that we are sangha and to practice, as Thây taught, finding peace in every step. Seeing and feeling the miracle of mindfulness.

Thich Nhat Hanh often uses this gatha for walking meditation:

I have arrived  
I am home  
In the here  
And in the now.

I am solid  
I am free,  
In the ultimate I dwell.

If this is your first time walking with us, there is a series of bells that help people to begin and end our walk, and to be aware of practicing as a sangha. If you just watch those around you, it will be clear what to do. The most important part is to please enjoy your walking meditation.

\*paraphrased from Living Buddha, Living Christ by Thich Nhat Hanh.

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