



# THE LONG ROAD TURNS TO JOY

A GUIDE TO WALKING MEDITATION

Author of *Happiness* | Thich Nhat Hanh





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*A Guide to Walking Meditation*

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# Table of Contents

[Title Page](#)

[ANYONE CAN DO IT](#)

[THE PRESENT MOMENT](#)

[EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON YOUR STEPS](#)

[WALKING LIKE A BUDDHA](#)

[AIMLESSNESS](#)

[TAKING THE FIRST STEP OF THE DAY](#)

[TOUCHING PEACE](#)

[WALK IN PEACE](#)

[SMILE LIKE A BUDDHA](#)

[REGAINING OUR SOVEREIGNTY](#)

[TOUCHING THE EARTH](#)

[HEALING MOTHER EARTH](#)

[CONSCIOUS BREATHING](#)

[COUNTING](#)

[BREATHE NATURALLY](#)

A MARVELOUS BALANCE OF MINDFULNESS  
STAY WITH YOUR BREATHING  
GETTING MORE FRESH AIR  
IMPROVED CIRCULATION

A PACT WITH A STAIRCASE

INTERBEING  
USING WORDS INSTEAD OF NUMBERS  
I HAVE ARRIVED

OUR TRUE HOME  
HERE AND NOW  
NIRVANA  
GROUND OF BEING

TOUCHING THE ULTIMATE DIMENSION  
THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS  
WALKING WITH A CHILD

HAPPINESS IS NOT AN INDIVIDUAL MATTER  
WALKING WHEN ANGRY

NOURISHING STEPS

WALK FOR ALL BEINGS

IT'S IN THE WAY YOU WALK

I WALK FOR YOU

GRATEFULNESS

WALKING IN DIFFICULT MOMENTS

WALKING IN THE CITY

LIVING DEEPLY

WALK LIKE A TIGER

FORMLESS PRACTICE

WE NEED TIME

THE PATH OF AWAKENING

A FLOWER BLOOMS BENEATH EACH STEP

YOU ARE THE GARDENER

THE MIRACLE IS TO WALK ON EARTH

THE SEAL OF AN EMPEROR

RETURN TO EARTH

THIS WONDROUS WORLD

WALKING IN THE PURE LAND

WITH EACH STEP, A BREEZE WILL RISE

BREATHING AND WALKING GATHAS

EMPTY FOOTPRINTS

TAKE MY HAND

THROUGH THE DESERTED GATE

KISS THE EARTH

THE EARTH IS WAITING FOR YOU

THE WELCOMING PATH

COME BACK

WELCOME BACK

THE PATH IS YOU

WALKING PEACE

PEACE IS EVERY STEP

*ABOUT THE AUTHOR*

*RELATED TITLES FROM PARALLAX PRESS*

*PHOTO CREDITS*

*WALKING NOTES*

*Copyright Page*





I have arrived  
I am home  
in the here  
in the now  
I am Solid  
I am free  
in the Ultimate  
I dwell



## **ANYONE CAN DO IT**

Walking meditation is meditation while walking. We walk slowly, in a relaxed way, keeping a light smile on our lips. When we practice this way, we feel deeply at ease, and our steps are those of the most secure person on Earth. All our sorrows and anxieties drop away, and peace and joy fill our hearts. Anyone can do it. It takes only a little time, a little mindfulness, and the wish to be happy.

## **THE PRESENT MOMENT**

The Buddha was asked, "What do you and your disciples practice?" and he replied, "We sit, we walk, and we eat." The questioner continued, "But Sir, everyone sits, walks, and

eats.” 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.”

Most of the time, we are lost in the past or carried away by the future. When we are mindful, deeply in touch with the present moment, our understanding of what is going on deepens, and we begin to be filled with acceptance, joy, peace, and love.

## **EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON YOUR STEPS**

The seed of mindfulness is in each of us, but we usually forget to water it. We think that happiness is only possible in the future—when we get a house, a car, or a degree. We struggle in our mind and body, and we don’t touch the peace and joy that are available right now in the blue sky, the green leaves, and the eyes of our beloved.

What is most important? Many people have passed exams and bought houses and cars, yet they are still unhappy. What is most important is to find peace and to share it with others. To have peace, you can begin by walking peacefully. Everything depends on your steps.



## **WALKING LIKE A BUDDHA**

The Buddha loved to walk. For the Buddha, walking is a way to remind oneself that mind and body are two aspects of the same thing. Walking is as simple as putting one foot in front of the other, but we often find it difficult or tedious. We drive a few blocks rather than walk to “save time.” When we understand the interconnectedness of body and mind, the simple act of walking like the Buddha can feel supremely easy and pleasurable.

When you take a step, you can touch the earth in such a way that you establish yourself in the present moment. You arrive in the here and the now. You don’t need to make any effort at all. Suddenly, you are free—from all projects, all worries, and all expectations. You are fully present, fully alive, and you are touching the earth.

When you practice slow walking meditation alone, you may

like to try this: Breathe in and take one step, and focus all your attention on the sole of your foot. If you have not arrived fully, one hundred percent in the here and the now, don't take the next step. I'm sure you can take a step like that, because there is Buddha nature in you. Buddha nature is the capacity of being aware of what is going on. Buddha nature is what allows you to recognize what you are doing in the present moment and to say to yourself: I am alive; I am taking a step. Anyone can do this. There is a Buddha in every one of us, and we should allow the Buddha to walk.



## AIMLESSNESS

In Buddhism, there is a word, *apranihita*. It means wishlessness or aimlessness. The idea is that we do not put anything ahead of ourselves and run after it. When we practice walking meditation, we walk in this spirit. We just enjoy the walking, with no particular aim or destination. Our walking is not a means to an end. We walk for the sake of walking.

A. J. Muste said, "There is no way to peace, peace *is* the way." Walking in mindfulness brings us peace and joy, and makes our lives real. Why rush? Our final destination will only be the graveyard. Why not walk in the direction of life, enjoying peace in each moment with every step? There is no need to struggle. Enjoy each step. We have already arrived.



## **TAKING THE FIRST STEP OF THE DAY**

Walking on the earth  
is a miracle!  
Each mindful step  
reveals the wondrous Dharmakaya.

We, too, are of the same nature as these wonders of the universe. We do not have to walk in space or on water to experience a miracle; the real miracle is to be awake in the present moment. Walking on the green earth, we realize the wonder of being alive. When we take steps like this, the sun of the *Dharmakaya*, our true Buddha body, will shine.

## **TOUCHING PEACE**



If you think that peace and happiness are somewhere else and you run after them, you will never arrive. It is only when you realize that peace and happiness are available here in the present moment that you will be able to relax.

In daily life, there is so much to do and so little time. You may feel pressured to run all the time. Just stop! Touch the ground of the present moment deeply, and you will touch real peace and joy.

## **WALK IN PEACE**

If you look deeply, you can see all the worries and anxiety people imprint on the earth as they walk. Our steps are usually heavy, filled with sorrow and fear. We feel insecure, and our steps reveal it.

This world has many paths. Some are lined with beautiful trees, some wind around fragrant fields, some are covered with leaves and blossoms. But if we walk on them with a heavy heart, we will not appreciate them at all.

When we were one or two, we began to take tottering steps. Now, we have to learn to walk again—slowly, with joy and ease. After a few days of practice, you will know how to do it. When I see you walking with deep comfort and peace, I will smile happily.



## **SMILE LIKE A BUDDHA**

As you make the effort to let go of your worries and anxieties, please smile. It may be just the beginning of a smile, but keep it there on your lips. It is very much like the Buddha's half smile. As you learn to walk as the Buddha walked, you can smile as he smiled. Why wait until you are completely transformed, completely awakened? You can start being a part-time Buddha right now!

The half-smile is the fruit of your awareness that you are here, alive, and walking. At the same time, smiling nurtures more peace and joy within you. Smiling as you practice walking meditation will keep your steps calm and peaceful, and give you a deep sense of ease. A smile refreshes your whole being and strengthens your practice. Don't be afraid to smile.

## **REGAINING OUR SOVEREIGNTY**

Your smile proves that you are not a colony, that you have sovereignty over yourself, and that you are doing your best. The Buddha is sometimes called “One who has Sovereignty over Himself or Herself.” Events carry us away, and we lose ourselves. Walking meditation helps us regain our sovereignty, our liberty as human beings. We walk with grace and dignity, like emperors, or lions. Each step is life.

## **TOUCHING THE EARTH**

When he was challenged by Mara—who personifies delusion—the Buddha touched the Earth with his right hand and said, “With Earth as my witness, I will sit here in meditation until I realize true awakening.” When he did that, Mara disappeared.

When we feel irritated, insecure, angry, or unhappy, we too are visited by Mara. When that happens, please touch the Earth deeply with your feet. Please practice walking meditation. The Earth, our mother, is filled with deep love for us. When we suffer, she will protect us, nourishing us with her beautiful trees, grasses, and flowers.



## **HEALING MOTHER EARTH**

Walking mindfully on the Earth can restore our peace and harmony, and it can restore the Earth's peace and harmony as well. We are children of the Earth. We rely on her for our happiness, and she relies on us also. Whether the Earth is beautiful, fresh, and green, or arid and parched depends on our way of walking. When we practice walking meditation beautifully, we massage the Earth with our feet and plant seeds of joy and happiness with each step. Our Mother will heal us, and we will heal her.

## **CONSCIOUS BREATHING**

The core practice taught by the Buddha was mindfulness,

including mindfulness of breathing: “Breathing in, I know I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.” This practice is like drinking a glass of cool water. As we breathe in, we really feel the air filling our lungs. In sitting meditation and in walking meditation we practice like this, paying close attention to each breath and each step.

## **COUNTING**

While walking, practice conscious breathing by counting steps. Notice each breath and the number of steps you take as you breathe in and as you breathe out.

If you take three steps during an in-breath, say silently, “One, two, three” or “In, in, in,” one word with each step. As you breathe out, if you take three steps, say, “Out, out, out,” with each step. If you take three steps as you breathe in and four steps as you breathe out, you say, “In, in, in. Out, out, out, out,” or “One, two, three. One, two, three, four.”

## **BREATHE NATURALLY**

Don’t try to control your breathing. Allow your lungs as much time and air as they need, and simply notice how many steps you take as your lungs fill up and how many you take as they empty, mindful of both your breath and your steps. The link is the counting.

When you walk uphill or downhill, the number of steps per breath will change. Always follow the needs of your lungs. Don’t try to control your breathing or your walking. Just observe them deeply.



## **A MARVELOUS BALANCE OF MINDFULNESS**

As you walk, you may notice that your exhalation is longer than your inhalation. You might find that you take three steps during your in-breath and four steps during your out-breath, or two steps, then three steps. If this is comfortable for you, please enjoy practicing this way. You can also try making the in-breath and the out-breath the same length, so that you take three steps with your in-breath and three with your out-breath. Keep walking and you will find the natural connection between your breath and your steps.

Don't forget to practice smiling. Your half-smile will bring calm and delight to your steps and your breath, and help sustain your attention. After practicing for half-an-hour or an hour, you will find that your breath, your steps, your counting, and your half-smile all blend together in a

marvelous balance of mindfulness.

## **STAY WITH YOUR BREATHING**

If you see something along the way that you want to touch with your mindfulness—the blue sky, the hills, a tree, or a bird—just stop, but while you do, continue breathing mindfully. You can keep the object of your contemplation alive by means of mindful breathing. If you don't breathe consciously, sooner or later your thinking will settle back in, and the bird or the tree will disappear. Always stay with your breathing.

## **GETTING MORE FRESH AIR**

After you have been practicing for a few days, try adding one more step to your exhalation. For example, if your normal breathing is 2-2, without walking any faster, lengthen your exhalation and practice 2-3 for four or five times. Then go back to 2-2.

In normal breathing, we never expel all the air from our lungs. There is always some left. By adding another step to your exhalation, you will push out more of this stale air. Don't overdo it. Four or five times are enough. More can make you tired. After breathing this way four or five times, let your breath return to normal. Then five or ten minutes later, you can repeat the process. Remember to add a step to the exhalation, not the inhalation.

## **IMPROVED CIRCULATION**

After practicing for a few more days, your lungs might say to

you, "If we could do 3-3 instead of 2-3, that would be wonderful." If the message is clear, try it, but even then, only do it four or five times. Then go back to 2-2. In five or ten minutes, begin 2-3, and then do 3-3 again.

After several months, your lungs will be healthier and your blood will circulate better. Your way of breathing will have been transformed.





## **A PACT WITH A STAIRCASE**

Twenty years ago I made an agreement with the staircase in my hermitage—that I would always pay attention when I walked on it—and since then I’ve never failed to go up and down the stairs in mindfulness. If you can succeed with your staircase, you can succeed everywhere. When you climb the first step, you breathe in. When you climb the next step, you breathe out. That is slow climbing. But if you want to climb a little bit more quickly, you can climb two steps while you breathe in, and two steps while you breathe out.

Promise the stairs that if, half way up, you realize you haven’t climbed mindfully, you will go back down and start again. If you don’t have a staircase, find a path, a hill, or some steps that you can climb every day so that you can practice your commitment to be mindful in every step.



## **INTERBEING**

In Plum Village, my practice community in France, everyone always walks in walking meditation style. Every time we go from one place to another, even a short distance—to the meditation hall, the dining hall, or even to the toilet—we walk mindfully.

Whenever I see someone walking mindfully, she or he is a bell of mindfulness for me. Seeing her walk mindfully, I touch the peace, joy, and the deep presence of her being, and the peace, joy, and deep presence of myself.

## **USING WORDS INSTEAD OF NUMBERS**

We can practice walking meditation by counting steps or by using words. If the rhythm of our breathing is 3-3, for example, we can say, silently, "Lotus flower blooms. Lotus flower blooms," or "The green planet. The green planet," as we walk. If our breathing rhythm is 2-3, we might say, "Lotus flower. Lotus flower blooms," or, "Walking on the green planet. Walking on the green planet," for 5-5. Or, "Walking on the green planet. I'm walking on the green planet," for 5-6.

We don't just say the words. We really see flowers blooming under our feet. We really become one with our green planet. Feel free to use your own creativity and wisdom. Walking meditation is for your enjoyment. It is not hard labor.

## **I HAVE ARRIVED**

You can also practice walking meditation using the lines of a poem. In Zen Buddhism, poetry and practice always go together.

I have arrived.  
I am home  
in the here,  
in the now.  
I am solid.  
I am free.  
In the ultimate  
I dwell.



## **OUR TRUE HOME**

When we practice walking meditation, we arrive in each moment. Our true home is in the present moment. When we enter the present moment deeply, our regrets and sorrows disappear, and we discover life with all its wonders. Breathing in, we say to ourselves, "I have arrived." Breathing out, we say, "I am home." When we do this, we overcome dispersion and dwell peacefully in the present moment, which is the only moment for us to be alive.

## **HERE AND NOW**

It is enjoyable to practice with the words of a verse like, "I Have Arrived." As you breathe in, you say, "Arrived" with

each step, and as you breathe out, you say “Home” with each step. If your rhythm is 2-3, you will say, “Arrived, arrived. Home, home, home,” coordinating the words and your steps according to the rhythm of your breathing. After practicing “Arrived/Home” for a while, if you feel relaxed and fully present with each step and each breath, you can switch to “Here/Now.” The words are different, but the practice is the same.

## **NIRVANA**

As you begin to arrive with each step, you become more solid. As you become more solid, you become more free. Solidity and freedom are two aspects of *nirvana*, the state of liberation from craving, fear, and anxiety.

The practice should be pleasant. When you feel happy, your solidity and your freedom will grow, and you will know you are on the path of right practice. You don’t need a teacher to tell you if you are enjoying the practice. If you enjoy it, you will feel solid and free. Then you can practice “Solid/Free,” as you walk.

## **GROUND OF BEING**

There are two dimensions to life: the historical dimension, in which you identify with birth and death, ups and downs, beginnings and endings; and the ultimate dimension, where you see clearly that all of these are only concepts. As your solidity and freedom grow stronger, you begin to touch the ground of your being, which is the ultimate dimension of reality, and the door of no birth and no death opens.



## **TOUCHING THE ULTIMATE DIMENSION**

The image often used for the two dimensions of life is that of water and waves. On the ocean's surface, there are many waves—some high, some low, some beautiful, and some less beautiful. All of them have a beginning and an end. But when you touch the waves deeply, you realize that waves are made only of water, and, from the point of view of the water, there is no beginning, no end, no up, no down, no birth, and no death.

When you touch the water—the ground of being—deeply, you can say, “In the ultimate, I dwell.” As you breathe in say, “Ultimate” with each step, and as you breathe out say, “I dwell.” These are not just words. If you really practice them, you will touch the world of no birth and no death with every step.

# THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Allow yourself to *be*. When you practice walking meditation, every step helps you arrive deeply in the present moment. You don't need anything else to touch real happiness. When your nose is stuffed, it may be difficult to enjoy your breathing. But now you can breathe freely, so please enjoy each breath. That is already peace and happiness. As you breathe out, smile. Exhaling helps expel many toxins. Breathing in and out, especially when the air is not too polluted, is the practice of peace and happiness.

As we cultivate peace and happiness in ourselves, we also nourish peace and happiness in those we love. In fact, we can enjoy each breath and each step for everyone in the ten directions.

## WALKING WITH A CHILD

When you walk, you might like to take the hand of a child. She or he will receive your concentration and stability, and you will receive the child's freshness and innocence. From time to time, she may want to run ahead and then wait for you to catch up. A child is a bell of mindfulness, reminding us how wonderful life is.

At Plum Village, I teach the young people a simple verse to practice while walking: "*Oui, oui, oui*," as they breathe in, and, "*Merci, merci, merci*," as they breathe out. "Yes, yes, yes. Thanks, thanks, thanks." I want them to respond to life, to society, and to the Earth in a positive way.



## **HAPPINESS IS NOT AN INDIVIDUAL MATTER**

All of our ancestors and all future generations are present in us. Liberation is not an individual matter. As long as the ancestors in us are still suffering, we cannot be happy, and we will transmit that suffering to our children and their children.

Now is the time to liberate our ancestors, and future generations, and free ourselves. If we can take one step freely and happily, touching the Earth mindfully, we can take one hundred. We do it for ourselves and for all previous and future generations. We all arrive at the same time and find peace and happiness together!



## WALKING WHEN ANGRY

When anger arises, walking meditation can be very helpful. Try reciting this verse as you walk:

*Breathing in, I know that anger is in me. Breathing out,  
I know this feeling is unpleasant.*

And then, after a while: *Breathing in, I feel calm.  
Breathing out, I am now strong enough to take care of  
this anger.*

Until you are calm enough to look directly at the anger, just enjoy your breathing, your walking, and the beauty of the outdoors. After a while, the anger will subside and you will feel strong enough to look directly at it, to try to understand its causes, and to begin the work of transforming it.



## **NOURISHING STEPS**

Walking meditation is like eating. With each step, we nourish our body and our spirit. When we walk with anxiety and sorrow, it is a kind of junk food. The food of walking meditation should be of a higher quality. Just walk slowly and enjoy a banquet of peace.

## **WALK FOR ALL BEINGS**

The air is cleanest in the early morning and late evening. That is the best time to enjoy walking meditation. Allow the energy of that pure air to enter you.

When you practice walking meditation in the morning, your movements will become smooth and your mind will become

alert. You will be more aware of what you are doing all day long. In making decisions, you will find that you are more calm and clear, with more insight and compassion. With each peaceful step you take, all beings, near and far, will benefit.



## **IT'S IN THE WAY YOU WALK**

The Buddha imprinted peace, joy, and serenity on the Earth with each step he took. When I visited Gridhrakuta Mountain where the Buddha taught, I walked on the same paths he did. I stood on the Earth where he stood. I sat on the same boulder on which he sat. Watching the brilliant red sunset, I knew the Buddha and I were watching the same sun at the same time.

When we walk as the Buddha did, we continue his work. We nurture the seeds of Buddhahood in ourselves and show our gratitude to the Buddha, not by what we say, but by the way we take peaceful, happy steps on the Earth.

## **I WALK FOR YOU**

The Vietnam War caused countless injuries to the minds and bodies of people on all sides. Many soldiers and civilians lost arms or legs. They cannot join their palms together to pay respect to the Buddha or practice walking meditation. We have to find alternate ways for them to practice walking meditation. One way is for those who can't walk to sit in a chair, choose someone who is practicing walking meditation, and become one with him, following his steps in mindfulness. In this way, they can make peaceful and serene steps together with their partners, even though they themselves can't walk. People can also roll their wheelchairs mindfully, letting each rotation of the wheels be an in-breath and out-breath.



## **GRATEFULNESS**

We who have two legs can easily practice walking meditation. We must not forget to be grateful. We walk for ourselves, and we walk for those who cannot walk. We walk for all living beings—past, present, and future.

## **WALKING IN DIFFICULT MOMENTS**

In 1976, I went to the Gulf of Siam to help the boatpeople who were adrift at sea. We hired three ships to rescue them and take them to a safe port. Seven hundred people were at sea on our ships when the Singapore authorities ordered me to leave the country and abandon all of them. It was two o'clock in the morning and I had to leave within twenty-four

hours.

I knew that if I could not find peace in that difficult moment, I would never find peace. So I practiced walking meditation all night long in my small room. At six o'clock, as the sun rose, a solution came to me! If you panic, you will not know what to do. But when practicing breathing, smiling, and walking, a solution may present itself.





## **WALKING IN THE CITY**

Walk wherever you are. Don't wait for the perfect forest path. Even when you go to the bus stop, make it into a walking meditation. Even if your surroundings are full of noise and agitation, you can still walk in rhythm with your breathing. Even in the commotion of a big city, you can walk with peace, happiness, and an inner smile. This is what it means to live fully in every moment of every day of your life.

## **LIVING DEEPLY**

The First Noble Truth taught by the Buddha is the presence of suffering. Awareness of suffering generates compassion, and compassion generates the will to practice the Way.

When I returned to France after trying to help the boatpeople, life there seemed so strange. I had just seen refugees who had been robbed, raped, and killed at sea, while in Paris the shops were filled with every kind of product, and people were drinking coffee and wine under neon lights. It was like a dream. How could there be such discrepancies? Aware of the depth of suffering in the world, we can vow not to live superficially.

## **WALK LIKE A TIGER**

When you begin to practice walking meditation, you might feel unbalanced, like a baby learning to walk. Follow your breathing, dwell mindfully in your steps, and soon you will find your balance. Visualize a tiger walking slowly, and you will find that your steps become as majestic as his.

## **FORMLESS PRACTICE**

You don't need to join your palms together or wear a solemn face to practice walking meditation. If possible, choose a quiet path in a park, near a lake, or along a riverbank.

The best practice is formless. Don't walk so slowly that people think you are strange. Walk in a way that others do not even notice that you are practicing. If you meet someone along the way, just smile and continue your walking.

## **WE NEED TIME**

You can practice walking meditation between meetings, on the way to your car, and up or down the stairs. When you walk anywhere, allow enough time to practice. Instead of three minutes, give yourself eight or ten. I always leave for the airport an extra hour early, so I can practice walking meditation there. Friends want to keep me until the last minute, but I resist. I tell them that I need the time.

## **THE PATH OF AWAKENING**

The practice of walking meditation opens your eyes to the wonders and the suffering of the universe. If you are not aware of what is going on around you, where do you expect to encounter ultimate reality?

Every path can be a walking meditation path, from tree-lined roadsides and fragrant rice paddies to the back alleys of Bosnia and the mine-filled dirt roads of Cambodia. When you are awake, you will not hesitate to enter any path.

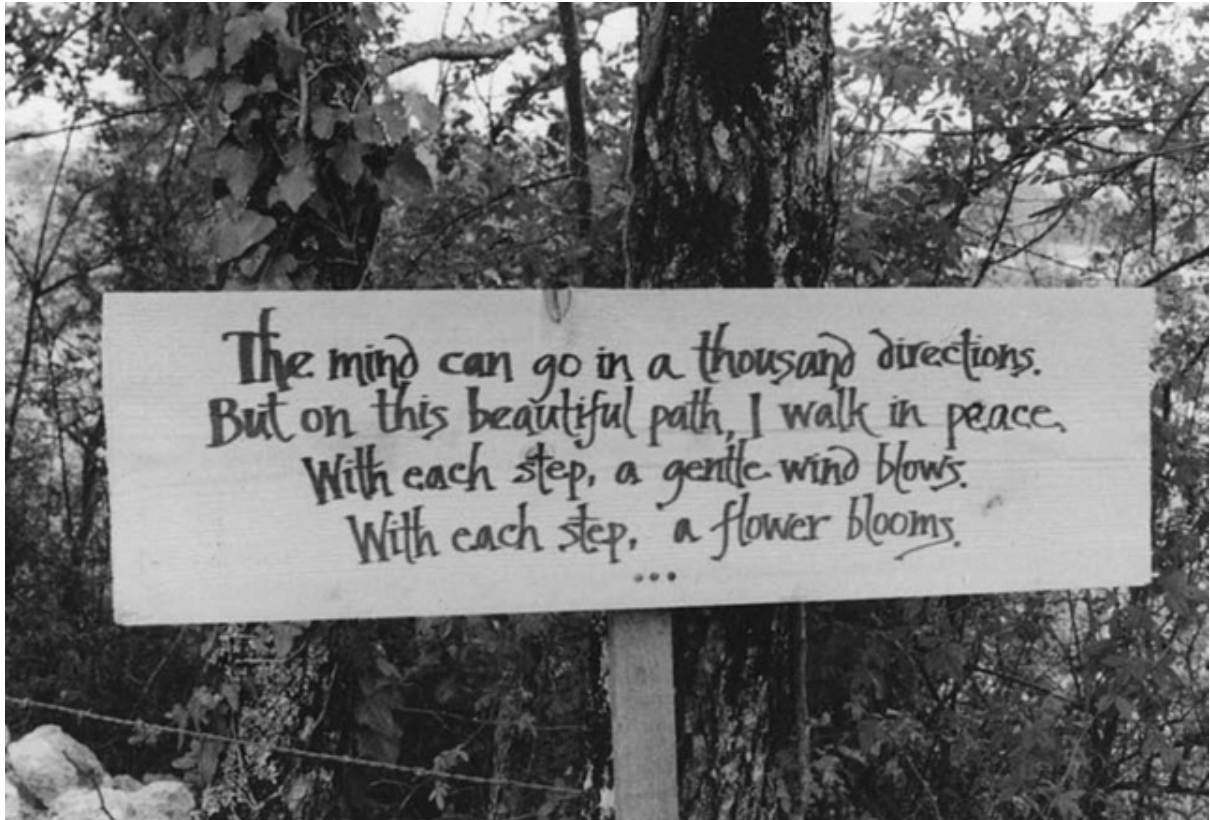
You will suffer, not just from your own worries and fears, but because of your love for all beings. When you open yourself in this way, your companions will be other beings on

the path of awakening who share your insight. They will work with you, side by side, to alleviate the world's suffering.



## **A FLOWER BLOOMS BENEATH EACH STEP**

When the baby Buddha was born, he took seven steps, and a lotus flower appeared under each step. When you practice walking meditation, you can do the same. Visualize a lotus, a tulip, or a gardenia blooming under each step the moment your foot touches the ground. If you practice beautifully like this, your friends will see fields of flowers everywhere you walk.



## **YOU ARE THE GARDENER**

Every time you practice walking meditation, investing your mind and body in every step, you are taking your situation in hand. Every time you breathe in and know you are breathing in, every time you breathe out and smile to your out-breath, you are yourself. You are your own master; you are the gardener in your own garden. We are relying on you to take good care of your garden, so that you can help your beloved to take care of hers.



# **THE MIRACLE IS TO WALK ON EARTH**

People say that walking on water is a miracle, but to me, walking peacefully on the Earth is the real miracle. The Earth is a miracle. Each step is a miracle. Taking steps on our beautiful planet can bring real happiness.

As you walk, be fully aware of your foot, the ground, and the connection between them, which is your conscious breathing.

## **THE SEAL OF AN EMPEROR**

Walk upright, with calm, dignity, and joy, as though you were an emperor. Place your foot on the Earth the way an emperor places his seal on a royal decree. A decree can bring happiness or misery. Your steps can do the same. If your steps are peaceful, the world will have peace. If you can make one peaceful step, then peace is possible.

## **RETURN TO EARTH**

Imagine that you and I are astronauts. We have landed on the moon, and we find that we cannot return to Earth because our ship's engine is broken beyond repair. We will run out of oxygen before Mission Control in Houston can send another ship to rescue us. We only have two days to live. What would we pray for? What would make us happier than to return to our beautiful planet and walk on it? When confronted with death, we realize the preciousness of walking on the green Earth.

Now we have somehow miraculously survived and have been transported back to Earth. Let us celebrate our joy by walking on our beautiful planet together, with deep peace

and concentration.

## **THIS WONDROUS WORLD**

The Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha is said to have lotus ponds, seven-gem trees, roads paved with gold, and celestial birds. But to me, dirt paths with meadows and lemon trees are much more beautiful. As a novice monk, I told my master, "If the Pure Land does not have lemon trees, I don't want to go there." He may have thought I was stubborn. He didn't say anything.

Later I learned that this world and the Pure Land both come from the mind. That made me very happy. I knew that when you walk mindfully, you are already in the Pure Land.

## **WALKING IN THE PURE LAND**

If I had supernatural powers, I would take you to the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha, where everything is beautiful. But if you bring your worries and anxieties there, you will defile it. To be ready to enter the Pure Land, you have to learn to make peaceful, anxiety-free steps. In fact, if you can learn to take peaceful, anxiety-free steps on the Earth, you won't need to go to the Pure Land. When you are peaceful and free, the Earth itself becomes a Pure Land, and there is no need to go anywhere else.





## **WITH EACH STEP, A BREEZE WILL RISE**

At the entrance of the walking meditation path of a Zen temple in Vietnam, a large stone is carved with these words: "With each step, a breeze will rise." The breeze is the peace and joy that blow away the heat of sorrow. When you walk this way, you do it for yourself and for all beings.



## **BREATHING AND WALKING GATHAS**

One day I was about to lead a walking meditation through the streets of Seoul, but I found it impossible to walk. Hundreds of cameramen were closing in, and there was no path at all. I said, “Dear Buddha, I give up, you walk for me.” The Buddha came right away, and he walked, and suddenly the crowd made a path for the Buddha to walk. After that experience, I wrote some new gathas to use in my own practice and they work very well.

Let the Buddha breathe.  
Let the Buddha walk.  
I don’t have to breathe.  
I don’t have to walk.

The Buddha is breathing.  
The Buddha is walking.

I enjoy the breathing.  
I enjoy the walking.

We're lazy from time to time. We're human. We can allow ourselves to be lazy. The Buddha is doing everything. As we let the Buddha walk and breathe for us, we can more fully enjoy the walking and breathing.

Buddha is the breathing.  
Buddha is the walking.  
I am the breathing.  
I am the walking.

There is only the breathing.  
There is only the walking.  
There is no breather.  
There is no walker.

Peace while breathing.  
Peace while walking.  
Peace is the breathing.  
Peace is the walking.

The breathing is enough. The walking is enough. We don't need a walker. We don't need a breather. Think of the rain. We're used to saying, "The rain is falling," or, "The wind is blowing." But if it's not falling, it's not rain. And if it's not blowing, it's not the wind. It is the same with breathing and walking with the Buddha. When we are just breathing and walking, we begin to touch the reality of no-self and we can experience true joy.

## **EMPTY FOOTPRINTS**

Foot and Earth touch.  
Bright sunflowers fill our eyes.  
In the distance, thunder roars.  
Sweat trickles down our cheeks.

Fully entering the world of birth and death,  
our tears nourish all beings.  
Transcending the world of birth and death,  
empty footprints going nowhere.

## **TAKE MY HAND**

Take my hand.  
We will walk.  
We will only walk.  
We will enjoy our walk,  
without thinking of arriving anywhere.  
Walk peacefully.  
Walk happily.  
Our walk is a peace walk.  
Our walk is a happiness walk.



## **THROUGH THE DESERTED GATE**

Through the deserted gate,  
full of ripened leaves,  
I follow the small path.  
Earth is as red as a child's lips.  
Suddenly  
I am aware  
of each step  
I make.

## **KISS THE EARTH**

Walk and touch peace every moment.  
Walk and touch happiness every moment.

Each step brings a fresh breeze.  
Each step makes a flower bloom.  
Kiss the Earth with your feet.  
Bring the Earth your love and happiness.  
The Earth will be safe  
when we feel safe in ourselves.

## **THE EARTH IS WAITING FOR YOU**

The Earth is always patient and open-hearted.  
She is waiting for you.  
She has been waiting for you  
for the last trillion lifetimes.  
She can wait for any length of time.  
She knows you will come back to her one day.  
Fresh and green, she will welcome you  
exactly like the first time,  
because love never says, "This is the last time";  
because Earth is a loving mother.  
She will never stop waiting for you.

## **THE WELCOMING PATH**

The empty path welcomes you,  
fragrant with grass and little flowers,  
the path paved with paddy fields  
still bearing the marks of your childhood  
and the fragrance of mother's hand.  
Walk leisurely, peacefully.  
Your feet touch the Earth deeply.  
Don't let your thoughts carry you away.  
Come back to the path every moment.  
The path is your dear friend.  
She will transmit to you  
her solidity

and her peace.

## **COME BACK**

With your mindful breathing,  
practice touching the Earth deeply.  
Walk as if you are kissing the Earth with your feet,  
as if you are massaging the Earth with each step.  
Your footprints  
will be the marks of an emperor's seal  
calling for Now to come back to Here,  
so that life will be present,  
so that your blood will bring the color of love to your face,  
so that the wonders of life will appear,  
and all anxieties will be transformed into  
peace and joy.

## **WELCOME BACK**

There were times you did not succeed.  
Walking on the empty path, you were floating in the air,  
lost in the cycle of birth and death  
and drawn into the world of illusion.  
But the beautiful path is patient,  
always waiting for you to come back,  
that path that is so familiar to you,  
and so faithful.  
It knows you will come back one day.  
And it will welcome you back.  
The path will be as fresh and as beautiful as the first time.  
Love never says that this is the last time.

## **THE PATH IS YOU**

That path is you.  
That is why it will never tire of waiting.  
Whether it is covered with red dust,  
autumn leaves,  
or icy snow,  
come back to the path.  
You will be like the tree of life.  
Your leaves, trunk, branches,  
and the blossoms of your soul  
will be fresh and beautiful  
once you enter the practice of Earth Touching.

## **WALKING PEACE**

Peace is the walk.  
Happiness is the walk.  
Walk for yourself  
and you walk for everyone.

## **PEACE IS EVERY STEP**

Peace is every step.  
The shining red sun is my heart.  
Each flower smiles with me.  
How green, how fresh, all that grows.  
How cool the wind blows.  
Peace is every step.  
It turns the endless path to joy.

*I Have Arrived*



Traditional

Thich Nhat Hanh  
arrangement: Betsy Rose

I have ar-rived. I am home in the here, in the

now. I have ar-rived. I am home in the here, in the

now. I am solid, I am free. I am solid, I am free. In the

ul- ti- mate I dwell. In the ul- ti- mate I dwell.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

THICH NHAT HANH is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk whose lifelong efforts to generate peace and reconciliation moved Martin Luther King, Jr. to nominate him for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967. He lives in southwest France and travels regularly, leading retreats on the art of mindful living. He is the author of *Buddha Mind Buddha Body*, *Happiness*, *One Buddha is Not Enough*, *Reconciliation*, and many other books.



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