

In-Between Times

By Bhante Bodhidhamma (<http://www.satipanya.org.uk>)

It's the in-between times that often let our practice down. Something in us thinks they are not important. We allow the mind to wander. A pity, because it undermines the good work we are putting in elsewhere.

When we rise from sitting, let's stand briefly and realise that it is necessary to keep at least general mindfulness of our actions until we find the place to do walking meditation. And then make it a resolution.

Or perhaps we are going to visit the toilet. So why rush there? Indeed, why wait till we have to rush? Why not make the trip a walking meditation? We need not go so slowly, but we can turn it into a valuable exercise.

There are all those things we do in the bathroom from washing our faces to using the toilet. Focus on these to detect any aversion around the calls of nature. Perhaps we see them as perfunctory: Let's just get them over with. If we catch ourselves rushing through these necessary actions, stop. Reflect on that. All this is part of our practice.

Then there's going up and down stairs. In itself, that can be a complete walking meditation. Why not take our time and note the various actions it takes to get us to the top of the stairs and back down again. We may find ourselves wandering into the bedroom and hanging around the bed wondering whether to have a kip. Having decided against such unskillful action, bring attention to bear and recommit to the practice.

Little occasions are opportunities too. For instance, the opportunity to communicate with a door. Rather than crash through feel the metal. Feel the spring's resistance. Use just sufficient pressure to open it. Experience the actions it takes to do this. Close it with the same mindfulness. The fridge too. Recall old habits of slamming the door shut. Instead, treat it with care and attention. When handling an object such as a plate, regard it as a Ming vase. Show it respect. The same with cutlery. Or putting on our shoes. Why rush the job? Let's take our time and turn it into a meditative exercise.

Acquiring the habit of making each action a precious moment will lift the whole of our practice. Often, we must beware being hijacked by a mood. We may rise from the posture and suddenly restlessness, like a wind, carries us from the hall. We need to stop and gauge where we are. Just stand and wait for the mood to die down or pass and then move. Much the same with aversion: 'Don't want to do this now!' Stop. Acknowledge it and wait for it to ease. Then move.

So let's devote the whole of this day — not just the formal practice — to moment-to-moment mindfulness and make sure it is all joined up. Not a moment lost. Building up the habit. For that's all it is. Let's commit ourselves to that. Just this day. One day dedicated to the practice of unbroken mindfulness.

