

# Focus Your Mind

## Mississauga Meditation Class – Neng Xiu

All the activities in our Huayen Ch'an Meditation Class, including the warm up exercises and the walking and sitting meditation, gear participants to focus their minds, to not have any wandering thoughts, and to pay attention to their body movements or breathing. Walking meditation plays an important role in training us to focus our minds while we are in motion, and prepares us to stay focused during sitting meditation. Walking meditation comes in four stages: i) Slow walking (very slowly making each footstep forward); ii) Normal walking (normal speed), iii) Fast walking, and iv) Running. Personally, I had some trouble keeping up with the pace of fast walking, so when it came to "running", it became a struggle. However, I found that if I could concentrate and focus on just one point, I could easily lift my feet, which felt somehow energized, and effortlessly follow the fellow meditator in front of me. Meditation classes provide us with the training and the opportunity to experience how to do the walking meditation properly to develop the practice of mindfulness.

A few months ago, Olivia, our Dharma Studies Leader, distributed Haiyun HeShang's "Dharma Phrases on Mindfulness" to the class:



**Focus your mind  
Still your mind  
If your mind wanders  
Bring it back**



I have come across these verses numerous times before, however, this time seeing them on paper made a stronger impression on my mind than simply hearing the words. Now, I continuously contemplate those words, letting the message linger in my mind.

The Mississauga Chapter of the Huayen Buddhist Community held its first Open House and BBQ party on August 20, 2005. Many dharma brothers and sisters, as well as a number of newcomers were in attendance. I was especially privileged to have the opportunity to meet our dharma sister, Erin Lu, from the Chicago chapter. She shared her insight with me on how she settles her mind. She memorizes her favorite dharma verses and whenever she is unable to focus her mind, she recites those verses wholeheartedly a few times. Then her mind settles. I

found this to be a good way to deal with insomnia. In the past, I have had many sleepless nights. I would wake up in the middle of the night and could not go back to sleep. In the past I have practiced sitting meditation to calm my mind, before I could get back to sleep. Ever since I learned about Erin's method of reciting dharma verses, I have applied it in place of the sitting meditation. First, I relax my entire body and mind, and then, with complete concentration I start reciting "Focus your mind, still your mind, if your mind wanders, bring it back." After reciting this 4 to 5 times, I fall asleep. This method works like a charm for me and, since practice makes perfect, now I only need to recite the verses a couple of times and I fall into a sound sleep, awakening to a beautiful morning. My insomnia is no longer a problem.

Last September my husband and I went on a vacation abroad. One day we decided to join the local tourist double-decker bus for a city tour. We had to go to the bus terminal to buy our tickets. According to the map, the bus terminal was within walking distance, however, after walking for quite a while, there was no sign of the terminal. The sun was shining down and it was very hot. The heat added to my frustration because I was already impatient and tired. I was feeling extremely irritated when I suddenly remembered the walking meditation practice. Right away I concentrated and recited my favorite verses. After reciting the verses a few times, I felt my footsteps getting lighter and lighter. I felt as if I had put on a pair of magic sneakers. My heels felt bouncy and strong, and within what seemed like mere seconds, we arrived at the bus terminal.

I now apply the same method during our walking meditation sessions. As soon as I recite "Focus Your Mind", I can focus my mind, and my legs become lighter and stronger. During sitting meditation session, whenever my mind wanders, I apply this method, thereby making it easier to focus on the counting of my breaths.

"Focus Your Mind" has innumerable uses that can be applied to any situation in our daily lives. Whenever we have a problem, we need to be mindful and aware. We need to focus our minds and still our minds and then we will be free from frustration and stress. Our problems can be solved with a clear mind, and our lives will be more at ease. This method is simple, however it does require practice. Focusing the mind is a skill that can improve not only the quality of our meditation but has practical application to our daily lives.