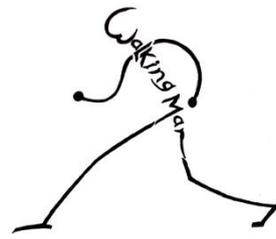


## SYNOPSIS – WALKING MAN



*Walking Man* by Jody O'Neill tells the story of a Walking Man and his son.

Once upon a time there was a Walking Man and a boy who lived in a big city surrounded by buildings as far as the eye could see. One day, the boy asked his father if he worked in the city. The Walking Man told the boy that he worked in the very top floor of the very tallest building in the entire city. The boy decided he too would like to work there. On his way to school one day the boy sat down to have a rest. His father, Walking Man was astonished; he never had time for a rest. He told the boy that he needed to keep moving if he wanted to get ahead and began walking on. The boy thought about this and decided from that day on to walk a little bit faster and to stop taking rests. He became Walking Boy.

One day, a girl called after Walking Boy and asked him to play, but Walking Boy kept on walking and refused to play with the girl. He explained to the girl that he didn't have time to play. He needed to keep moving if he wanted to work in the very top floor of the tallest building in the whole city. The girl decided she too would like to do this so she began walking with Walking Boy. Walking Boy suggested they should have a race. They raced fast, but Walking Girl tripped and fell over. She cried out for help. But Walking Boy never stopped, he never looked back. He had to keep moving if he wanted to get ahead.

The Walking Boy grew stronger and taller. He walked faster and he was happy on his own. However, sometimes he felt like something was following him. He looked all around him and wondered who could be fast enough to catch up with him. Sometimes the Walking Boy would hear crying but he didn't wait to see who it was. Walking Boy walked even faster until the feeling would pass. He wanted to become as tall and as fast as his father.

Walking Man was very proud of Walking Boy but he never took the time to say it to him. When Walking Boy grew up, he went to college where he graduated first in his class and in record time. At his graduation ceremony Walking Boy was pronounced Walking Man.

Before he began his job on the bottom floor of the very tallest building, he paid his father a visit. His father had grown old but the new Walking Man was moving too fast to notice. Walking Man asked his father if he was proud of him. His father said he mustn't stop now; he had to keep moving if he was going to get ahead. Soon after, Walking Man's father closed his eyes and never opened them again. At the funeral Walking Man felt the same old thing was following him again but he just worked faster and harder than before and soon reached the top floor of the very tallest building.

Here, he met Walking Woman. They walked together, fell in love and got married. Then they had Walking Baby. One day the boy asked his father, like Walking Man had once done why there were so many buildings in the city. Walking Man explained as his father had, that it was a busy city and there was a lot of money to be made. It was important to keep moving if he wanted to get ahead. The boy decided he too would follow in his father's footsteps. One day the Walking Boy sat on the road just as Walking Man had once done. Walking Man told him he needed to keep moving if he wanted to get ahead. So he did just that.

The Walking family walked together, they even had special walking beds. However, Walking Man awoke one morning with a strange burning feeling in his legs. He told Walking Woman, they decided he should walk it off and he would soon feel better. But Walking Man just kept walking, he forgot about Walking Woman and Walking Boy and walked and walked and walked.

He walked right into the countryside, past the quizzical ducks, the chatty shopkeepers, the sneezing train into the fields and the countryside but he couldn't shake the strange feeling. Walking Man didn't notice the magnificent flowers or the beautiful morning. The mountain asked Walking Man to rest, but he told the mountain he needed to shake this feeling. A sly fox advised him to have a rest but Walking Man ignored them both and kept walking. The feeling grew stronger and closer than ever before. A voice pleaded with Walking Man to wait but he didn't hear it, he kept on walking.

Two horses playing in the field asked him to play but he stomped on. Until he came to a sign saying, "End of the road – Go no further". (O'Neill, 2010, p. 18)

Walking Man didn't know what to do. He placed his head in his hands and cried.

He cried so much he created a river which is still there today. Suddenly, he noticed another Walking Man sitting beside him. Walking Man's shadow had finally caught up with him. He had become unstuck a long time ago and had been trying to catch up ever since.

Walking Man asked the shadow what he should do. The shadow told Walking Man to look up and around him. They watched and listened to the world around them. Walking Man thought of Walking Boy and Walking Woman. He began the long journey home, but this time he took notice of everything around him and took time to rest on the Mountain.

On his way back to the city, Walking Man noticed the greyness of the busy people. He bumped into Walking Boy who was on his way to work. Walking Man was shocked. Walking Boy decided to spare five minutes and talk to his father. He explained that Walking Woman had walked herself into thin air while looking for Walking Man.

Walking Man began to cry. Walking Boy had never seen tears before. Walking Man asked Walking Boy to sit down. He showed Walking Boy how to sit down and told him his story. While Walking Boy was listening to his father's story, his shadow appeared beside just as Walking Man's shadow had done. They laughed and laughed.

Walking Man and Walking Boy decided to take things more slowly from then on. They set up a slow food café and took time to play and rest. They still miss Walking Woman and are still searching for ways to slow her down. Now, Walking Man travels the world sharing his story.