

Walking meditation

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to the present moment and observing our experience. Whilst many formal mindfulness exercises are practiced in a stationary position either seated or laying down, mindful awareness can also be practiced during movement. This is particularly helpful as you are developing your mindfulness capacity and bringing it to everyday life, cultivating awareness of your mind, your body and your surroundings as you move through your day.

Place and pathway

- Find a location where you can safely walk approximately 10-30 paces
- Plan your pathway. You may choose to walk forwards and backwards along a line, or follow a circular or figure 8 pathway. The idea is to try to contain your pathway during the exercise. This containment challenges the default belief that we are walking to get somewhere, to do something. Mindful walking is about 'being' during walking, not doing.
- Choose a place where you are unlikely to be disrupted or approached during the exercise.
- If you can do so safely, you may choose to do this exercise barefooted.

Your first short, slow walk (the first pass)

- Stand in an upright position with your back and neck straight and with your hands gently by your sides. Remain relaxed and alert, bringing attention to your breath.
- With the curiosity of a young child, take your first step and then your second at a slower pace than usual.
- As you continue at this slow pace, sense each step fully. Focus your attention on your feet and notice the sensations that arise. The pressure that arises through your feet as it touches the earth, the weight, the temperature, any tingling sensations. Pay attention to the shifting sensations as your feet work through each step.
- As you continue the exercise the feet become the anchor for attention if your mind wanders (as opposed to the breath as observed in mindfulness of breath)
- When you get to the end of your path stop for a moment. Bring attention to your whole body and the space around you. You may choose to close your eyes during this short standing meditation of 5-15 seconds.

Maintaining equanimity

- Continue this process of short, slow passes up to 5-10 minutes.
- As with all mindfulness practices, other thoughts and body sensations will arise in your present moment. Plans, memories, fantasies, feelings may arise. When they do, notice when it happens, pause, without judgement, and bring your attention back to your next step.
- You may wish to slightly alter the speed of your walking pace during the exercise where it allows you to be most mindful.

Concluding

- During your last pass, begin again as if it was your first, with childlike curiosity. Slow your pace down with still, deliberate attention to each step.
- Bring your feet together to stand. Take 3 deliberate breaths and conclude.

