

Mindful Walking

To begin this walking meditation standing still, upright, stable. Feeling your feet touching the ground...closing your eyes if that feels right for you. Bringing your attention to your body, standing, feeling its weight. Gently lean to the left...and the right...forwards...and backwards to find a central, balanced standing posture. Standing by a wall if you need support. Noticing if there are any areas of tension, allowing your knees to slightly unlock and relax any unnecessary tightness in your legs, arms, shoulders, jaw, softening your face as much as you can. Allowing your arms to hang naturally by your sides. Ensuring that your body is grounded, like a tree, firmly rooted to the ground with dignity and poise.

Becoming aware of your natural in-breath and outbreath. Noticing the weight of your feet on the floor. Gently leaning to the left...and the right...observing how the sensations in your feet change as you do this. Opening your eyes but try to keep them focused...with soft gaze, 3 feet or so in front of you...not looking around too much as it can be distracting. Now gently shifting your weight to the left until almost all your weight is in your left foot. Noticing all the sensations that happen as you do this. Now shifting over to your right foot and noticing the sensations there. You may notice movement, pressure, or stretching of muscles. Now shifting back to your left foot and slowly lifting your right heel off the ground. Pausing here for a moment, noticing the sense of anticipation about something as basic as taking a step. Now lifting your right foot off the ground and placing it in front of you, becoming aware of the weight of your body shifting from the left to the right foot. Noticing the sensations in your feet and legs as you do that. Now beginning to transfer your weight again from the right foot to the left, taking a step...with this step, feeling the movement, the stretching, the placing, the shifting. Doing this slowly so we bring awareness to the movement of our body...and in the body...mostly in the legs and feet right now. Once almost all the weight is in the left foot, slowly lifting and placing the right foot in front of the left. Continuing walking in this slow mindful way, sustaining our attention on the feet to begin with. Lifting the foot...moving the foot...and placing the foot. Noticing what part of the foot makes initial contact with the ground...is it the heel? Is it the toes? Bringing awareness to the feet connecting with the ground.

And now, walking at a slow pace around the line you've designated for yourself, just back and forth. Experiment with walking slowly or you may find a different pace that feels right for you right now, in this moment. And, when the mind starts to wander or judge this experience, as with the breathing meditation, gently escorting your attention and awareness back to the feet and legs.

When you get to the end of the designated area, turning around. Noticing the sensations of the body turning, the muscles that are involved with turning. Expanding your awareness now to the entire body. Are the core

muscles involved in turning? As you start walking again, noticing what other muscles are involved with this activity. Maybe placing your hand on your lower back, noticing what is here to be felt. Placing your hand just above the hip, are muscles in this area engaged in walking right now? What about the pelvis, is it engaged? Bringing attention to the leg muscles - the quads, hamstrings, calves, as you shift your weight from left to right and right to left, slowly, or a bit faster - moment by moment by moment, step by step by step. Bringing your awareness to the upper body now, to the arms as they naturally swing to, assisting in maintaining balance in this moment. Observing the sensations in the shoulders, the neck, the face and the whole of the head.

Keeping the attention in the body, seeing if you can you walk at a normal pace. For most people it helps to walk slowly, but experimenting with this now. Taking one step after the next. If you notice yourself getting bored or antsy, just notice that's happening. Nothing is wrong; all is well. Just noticing that's happening, and then returning to the body sensations involved in walking. Maybe you are noticing yourself enjoying this meditation, feeling the enjoyment in your body. Let yourself really get into the process of walking, it is such a precious thing to be able to walk and we generally do not remember that. So being with the body, feeling the touch and the movement, moving through space, fully present...aware...connected... embodied...moment by moment by moment.

Get a sense of the whole body breathing and walking mindfully. As you continue walking, expanding the awareness to sights, sounds and smells around the room. Bringing curiosity and openness to whatever is here to be noticed, whether pleasant or unpleasant. Bringing gratitude for this ability to...walk.

Now, coming to a stop and closing the eyes, if that's accessible to you. Feeling your body standing here. Noticing its weight. Noticing the impact of this walking meditation practice on the body. How did it affect you? Can you feel a difference from before you started? How do you feel internally? How's your mood? Just noticing whatever you are aware of, right now...in this moment. Now feeling the feet firmly on the ground...as the sound of the bell brings this meditation to a close.