

Mindful & Meditative Walks

WALKING

Meditation walks are at a slower pace than a regular walk/hike. This allows for the mind to focus on the surroundings and oneself; to be present in the moment rather than “getting to done.” If your mind is wandering, downshift to a slower pace ... this is counter intuitive to our typical way of speeding up to get through patches of life that we find “boring” or “uninteresting.”



BREATHING

During the walk take full, deep breaths. This tells your body that it's okay to relax – to let go of stress. Circular breaths, (breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth) work best. Let your tongue rise and fall to support this pattern. Focus on your breath when your mind starts to wander.

STAYING PRESENT

We cannot stop thoughts! We have ~ 60,000 thoughts each day – most of these appear on their own, and many are exactly the same ones that we had the day before!

When thoughts appear, just acknowledge them then return to the present moment. In nature, watching our footing keeps us present; or, focusing on our in-out breath. Consider adding these silent thoughts to your in-out breaths as well:

- Here – now
- I breathe in – I breathe out
- Inhale a positive quality (e.g., peace, love, joy)



USING YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Use the features of your walking path to enhance your walk. Here are some ideas:

- Every time you see a trail marker, bring your thoughts back to the present
- If there are benches, decks or large rocks consider taking a :10 standing or sitting meditation
- If there are steps on the path, use them to recite a positive quality you'd like to have more of (e.g., patience, light-heartedness)

SHINRIN-YOKU

Shinrin-yoku is the art of forest bathing – breathing in tree air in an atmosphere that generates relaxation. From my experience, this is best found on dirt trails, walking circular paths (rather than out-and-back trails) and where there's an intersection with water (i.e., creek/river, lake). Before you head into the woods, rate your emotional energy level from -5 to +5; after you finish your walk, re-rate yourself. Did you experience a positive shift?

ABOUT ME

I have personally been meditation walking in nature for 5+ years. I am out on local trails or greenways 3 – 5 days/week using this practice to balance and expand my life. I have worked through many problems and experienced many a-ha moments while out walking. I also lead/teach groups on how to use this practice to reduce stress; and, to connect deeply with self and nature.

Want to attend more meditation walks?

I run a local Meetup group:

www.Meetup.com/MIMEwalk

Want to learn more about meditation walking techniques/locations? Check out the Nature Rx and Blog pages on my website:

<http://www.TheLivingnessCenter.com>

BODY FORM

Your body should be as invisible as possible while walking. To help with this:

- Walk without anything in your hands – use a fanny or back pack to carry your stuff; and, leave behind walking poles
- Check that your body is a straight line, including your spine and head
- From time-to-time, run a body scan to see that your face neck/shoulders and arms are relaxed



TURNING OFF THE WORLD

When we're able to step out of our day-to-day life, then we're better able to step back into it renewed and refreshed. To do this, be sure to leave behind the “3 T”s:

- Technology – turn off, silence or leave behind your cell phone
- Talking – hold the silence with those you're walking with or passing by
- Thoughts – return to the here-now whenever your mind wanders to the past or future

WHY MEDITATION WALKING?

There are many ways to spend time in nature, and they all have their own purposes. Meditation walking is different than other ways of walking because it helps us to be 100% present to the experience – to nature, to ourselves, to the here-now. It is a practice where body-mind-spirit are all fully present; and, where all three of these elements are going the same direction. It allows us to turn off the hurriedness and multitasking of life.

