

# Walking Meditation

## Mindfulness Worksheet

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

Thoughts?  Heart?  Body?  None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



## WALKING MEDITATION

Sometimes, it can feel impossible to sit still, let alone to sit still and “do nothing”. When we’re dealing with a lot of anxiety, or a difficult life situation that is outside of our control, the idea of not moving can feel daunting.

While meditation is often seen as something that must be done in a seated position (preferably lotus-style, with a perfectly straight spine and a mind that’s empty of any thoughts or feelings aside from pure bliss, right?)... many meditation traditions include walking as part of their practice. Ironically, moving in meditation can be a powerful way to quiet our inner chatter, slow down the pace of our thoughts, and come into contact with the present moment, allowing our nervous systems to unwind.

Our bodies offer all the assistance we need to get into the present moment. They do this for us all the time, for free! Our bodies are a permanently open door to access the now, and to move away from believing unhelpful thoughts.



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1. **Choose a linear space** – one where you can walk, get to a spot to stop and then change direction (rather than go in a circle).

If you're indoors, it's preferable to have an unobstructed area that's at least 10 slow walking paces long. 12 or 14 feet in length is adequate. If you have a room to practice in, going from one wall to the opposite one and back again makes it easy.

If you're outdoors, you'll have more options. Try choosing a space where you won't be disturbed, and where you'll have the privacy to slow down and look like a zombie for a few minutes.

2. **Stand at one end of your space.** Feel the sensation and weight of your feet on the floor, and how they are holding your body upright. Feel your body's ability to balance. Do a gentle scan of your legs, torso, arms, neck and head, checking in to see if there is any stiffness or soreness. If so, just acknowledge those areas. Say hello to them, and tell them that it's okay for them to be here.

Feel the muscles and bones that are supporting you and keeping you mobile. Allow your hands to be in whatever position feels comfortable for you – by your sides, in your pockets, clasped behind your back. There is no one right way of doing this.

Allow your body to be relaxed, but alert.

3. **Begin walking at a slower pace than you usually would.** Pay attention to the sensation of each foot lifting up, being momentarily off the ground, and then touching the ground again. Feel the sensation of the ground holding you up.

Notice the sensation of walking in your legs. Is there heaviness? Lightness? Pressure? Tingling? Energy? Discomfort? Allow the sensation of walking to be your access to the present moment. Let it be your focus, as you slow your pace even further.

Notice what comes up as you slow down – if there is anxiety, curiosity, or any other emotion you might not expect? Allow it all to be there as part of your focus.

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When you arrive at the end of your “path”, stop for a moment. Let your senses awaken. Feel what it feels like for your body to stand still, being present.

Then, very slowly and mindfully, turn around and face the other direction. Before you start walking again, pause and notice your body, and any emotions that are arising. You can even stand for a few more moments with your eyes closed.

4. After a few minutes of walking meditation, try to slow your pace a little bit more. Your balance might feel slightly off from walking this slowly – that’s normal. Try to feel each foot as you lift it up and put it back down.

Notice the moments when your mind wanders, which is totally normal and natural. When you see it happening, try to mentally pause and gently note the fact that you’re thinking. You can even label (with compassion) where your mind went: planning, fantasizing, worrying. Then, with kindness, return your attention to the sensation in each step.



Remember: no matter how long you’ve been lost in thought, there’s always a now to return to, with kindness and even with humour.



### A few notes:

Movement meditation can evoke strong emotions. There’s something about moving mindfully for some of us that actually really gets us into our bodies. You might feel grief out of nowhere, or fear or anxiety, or even bliss.

When this happens, it’s a good idea to just pause and acknowledge the experience that’s calling your attention. You might even place a hand on your heart, and give yourself compassion. Note how it feels, and bring it with you on your walking.

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Notes:

If you find your mind is super distracted, you can try saying: “lifting, placing” with each step.

The reason we do walking meditation on a short pathway is to free ourselves from the idea that we’re going somewhere else. But that doesn’t mean you can’t practice this when you go for a walk, or even when you’re cooking or cleaning your home. Try it and see what happens.

