

Mindful Walking

“People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or thin air, but to walk on the earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves. All is a miracle.” — *Thich Nhat Hanh, author of Peace Is Every Step, nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

Mindful walking is different than walking to get somewhere or while you're spaced out and on autopilot. Walking mindfully is about bringing your full attention to the simple embodied experience of walking. It is a great practice to reduce stress, increase energy, and become more present. Mindful walking can be done as an informal practice anytime you are walking anywhere. It is also a good formal practice that you can do when you are tired or have been sitting all day.

Mindful Walking Practice

1. Standing, take three mindful breaths and feel the breath coming in and going out.
2. Lose your monkey mind and come to your senses. Silently name at least three things that you see, smell, hear, taste, or touch—for example, the blue sky, the sound of birds, the sun on your face.
3. Sense your body standing here. Take a moment to rock forward and back and side to side and find your center.
4. Breathing in, take one step. Breathing out mindfully, take the next step.
5. Walk slowly, synchronizing your breath with your steps.
6. Feel your feet touching the ground. Feel your arms swinging and your body in motion.
7. If you feel awkward or weird, just notice that, and see if you can do this in a playful way.
8. When you notice that your attention wanders off into monkey mind, you simply come back to noticing each step, your breath, and the sights and sounds around you.
9. To help yourself stay present, you can finally say to yourself “here” and “now” with each step and breath.

Mindful Walking at a Faster Pace

1. Similar to the above practice but can be done anytime you want to walk at a faster pace.
2. Synchronize your breathing with your steps. You can experiment with different variations to find a pace and a rhythm that works for you—for example, two steps with each inhale + three steps with each exhale.