

MINDFULNESS WALKING

... from Anywhere

Mindfulness is about slowing down, noticing and connecting with what is already here. We usually go through our days in so much of a rush that we rarely slow down to notice. COVID-19 has introduced even more unknowns and commotion into our often overscheduled and busy lives.

This mindfulness walk is no different from any other walk you may have taken in the past. The only difference is that you will purposefully bring your attention to each moment.

You do not need any previous experience in mindfulness. All you need to do is notice.

To make the most of this walk, you may want to do the following:

- Be safe. Please follow your local/state stay-at-home orders and remember to practice social distancing. Don't get so caught up in noticing the world around you that you forget to look before crossing the street.
- Be kind to yourself. If you are unable to physically and/or safely walk outside, then use your imagination and go for a walk inside your mind.
- Slow down. Take your time. Allow yourself to relax into the experience.
- The numbers are meant to be stopping/pause points. Follow them if it feels right. If it doesn't, feel free to go in any order.
- Leave your phone at home (or put it on silent).
- Try to remain in silence for the duration of the walk. Silence will allow you to tune in more easily to the senses and allow you to be more fully present.
- As much as you can — and it can be hard! — set aside your worries, to-dos and preoccupations. Give yourself permission to connect with the world of sensations in the here and now.
- This is a self-guided activity. You can make it as long or as brief as you wish.
- Your attention will wander. It will drift to thoughts or responsibilities or events. That is just what minds do. It is normal and expected. AND ... when you notice it, congratulate yourself, because this is mindfulness in action! And then, kindly and gently, bring your attention back to the present moment.

1. Before beginning this walking meditation, take a few moments to just stand. Simply stand still and notice the sensations — the sense of touch — in the soles of the feet on the ground. Feeling grounded. Allow any thoughts or emotions to just be. Not judging. Not trying to change anything. Just become aware of how it is for you. Right here. Right now.


Begin to walk slowly. Allow yourself to walk with ease and dignity, knowing that the only place you have to be right now is right here. Notice the changing sensations in the soles of the feet. Feel the sensations of lifting your foot off the earth and then again as you place it back on the ground. Don't try to change anything. Just notice what it is like for you to move from one place to another.

2. Let your attention be drawn to something close to you. See it as if for the first time. Maybe it's a flower. Or a leaf. Or a branch. Or a tiny insect crawling across a plant. Contemplate it, taking in all of its features and qualities. If it's appropriate, use as many of your sense perceptions (or your imagination) to contemplate this object. Sight. Smell. Hearing. Touch.* Taste.*

*(*definitely use your imagination here)*

3. Bring your attention to the soundscape around you. Notice that there is no need to go searching for sounds — there are many sounds around us. See if you can open up to all the sounds around you as they arise. Nearby sounds. Faraway sounds. Sounds in front, behind, to the side. Sounds above or sounds below. See if you can notice how the obvious sounds can easily crowd out the subtler ones. Perhaps you can also notice the silence between sounds.

Notice sounds as they come and go with curiosity and interest. See if, rather than naming specific sounds or attaching stories or judgements to them, it is possible to simply experience the sound's qualities (loudness, duration, timbre, pitch, tone).



4. Bring your awareness to the sense of sight and notice the entirety of your visual field. Notice where there is movement and the qualities of this movement. Perhaps notice where you see movement that is always there, yet because of that, may be overlooked. Or perhaps you're in a place where movement changes from moment to moment. Simply notice the movements around you as they arise. Are they fast? Slow? Constant? Changing? Are there sounds associated with any of these movements?

Perhaps again focus on feeling the soles of the feet, knowing that you are standing solidly on the earth as the world continues to move around you. Take a few moments to feel what it's like to stand here and be supported by the ground beneath you.

5. Open your awareness to the color palette of your surroundings. Turn your head or your body to take in the totality of colors all around you. Notice the colors of your surroundings and where shadows or sunlight change its colors. Notice the buildings, or the houses. Or the fields, or trees. Notice the colors in front of you. And those that are behind. Notice where one color turns into another. Can you catch any unexpected pops of color here? From lights? Or signs? Or building materials? Allow yourself to notice. Simply notice all of the colors that surround you. Right here. In this moment.

6. Notice the colors of the sky. Are the colors subtle or obvious? Do you notice any clouds? If so, focus your attention on the shape and the texture of the clouds. Notice their density. Allow yourself to rest for a few moments in this experience.

*If, at any point, you notice that you are starting to think about the past or planning for the future, or are getting caught up in the worries or the stories that go along with them, tell yourself that this is OK. This is actually a moment of mindful awareness!
And you can choose to come back to the present moment again and again with kindness and curiosity.*

7. As you walk, notice how your body feels. Can you feel different muscles being used if you walk up hill or upstairs vs. walking down? Or on a street or sidewalk vs. on grass? What happens if you take bigger steps? Or smaller steps? If you speed up? Or slow down? Remember, there's no need to judge or change anything. Simply notice what is happening for you moment to moment.

8. Bring your attention to all that surrounds you. Use your imagination to sense what these objects might feel like. Perhaps the coolness of grass or the roughness of the sidewalk under your feet. The coarseness of a tree's trunk. The softness of a passing puppy. Noticing how many textures make up the world that surrounds you in this moment.

9. Take a moment to pause. Simply stand still. Notice how your body feels now that you've been moving for a little while. What sensations are present? You might notice warmth or tingling. Buzzing. Coolness. The feeling of air or clothing on your skin. You may notice an absence of sensations. Allow yourself to be exactly as you are, knowing there is no right way and no wrong way to feel. It's simply whatever is here for you in this moment.

10. Before returning to your house or your workspace, take a moment to congratulate yourself for taking this time just for you. Remember that you can bring mindfulness to walking in your everyday life — on your way to a meeting, or up and down a flight of stairs, or on your way to the kitchen for a snack. Perhaps over the next few days you might try to bring this same degree of awareness to your walking — experiencing the sense of presence that is available to all of us in every moment as our lives unfold.