

## Walking Meditation

Meditation is a practice of presence that you can bring alive in all settings and activities. The formal training in walking meditation can be particularly valuable for helping you to cultivate an awareness of your embodied experience in each moment, allowing you to bring your body, heart, and mind together as you move through life.

Begin by choosing a place - an indoor or outside walking path about 10-30 paces long. Start by standing still and sensing the weight of your body at your feet, feeling your muscles supporting and stabilizing you. Your hands can be in whatever position is most comfortable - resting easily at your sides, folded gently in front of you, or at your back. In the stillness, remain relaxed and alert.

As you begin walking, start at a slower pace than usual, paying particular attention to the sensations in your feet and legs: heaviness, lightness, pressure, tingling, energy, even pain if it's present. For the walking practice, this play of sensations - rather than the breath or another anchor - is often the home base for our attention. Be mindful of the sensations of lifting your feet and of placing them back down on the floor or earth. Sense each step fully as you walk in a relaxed and natural way to the end of your chosen path. When you arrive, stop and pause for a moment. Feel your whole body standing, allowing all your senses be awake, then slowly and mindfully – with intention - turn to face in the other direction.

Before you begin walking, pause again to collect and center yourself. If it helps, you can even close your eyes during these standing pauses, often called “standing meditation.” As you're walking, it's quite natural for your mind to wander. Whenever it does, you might mentally pause, perhaps noting inwardly the fact of thinking, or even where your mind went: planning, worrying, fantasizing, judging. Then, gently return your attention to the sensations of the next step. No matter how long you've spent lost in thought, you can always arrive right here, bringing presence and care to the moment-to-moment sensations of walking.

During the walking period you might alter your pace, seeking a speed that allows you to be most mindful of your experience. In this way, you'll move back and forth on your pathway, discovering that you are not really going anywhere, but are arriving again and again in the aliveness that is right here. As Thich Nhat Hanh teaches, “The miracle is not to walk on water. It is to walk on this earth with awareness.”

~ Tara Brach