

Walking meditation

Welcome to the RelationKit mindfulness series. In today's practice we will be exploring a walking meditation, where your focus or your 'anchor', so to speak, is the movements that your body makes as you walk. In this meditation, you will be bringing all of your attention to those movements and the felt sense of your body as you walk to help keep you present and in the here and now.

So maybe you are going on the school run, or just on your way to the bus stop, or even finding a place at home to practice this. Walking meditation can be done in a very short distance, say 15 metres or so. Choosing a short journey or place now where you can bring your present moment attention to your experience of walking.

When you are ready, just stand for a moment on both feet. Close your eyes there, if you wish, and just find your balance here. Allow your body to adjust, so letting any small movements that naturally come that help your body to become more upright and awake, feeling your weight becoming even over both feet now, your hips and pelvis are comfortable. You can bend the knees a little if that helps. The arms relax down by your sides. Let your attention sweep through your body for a moment, feeling your body from inside out; feeling your body here in this moment.

And now begin on your walk, keeping a gentle awareness of your breath as you do, and beginning to just feel the contact of your foot meeting the ground as you step it forwards and down, and feeling the shifting of your weight to one side, and the lifting of the opposite leg and how it feels to step that foot down into the ground. Can you notice all the feelings that are felt in your body as you move in this way now, from side to side, and to step into your footprints?

It might be that you feel the smaller movements of the muscles in your foot, or ankle, or your calf, or maybe your attention might be with your whole body moving through space. Just seeing where your attention flows. Be with those movements of you.

Notice the tendency to rush. At first you may be walking fast because it matches the fastness of your mind and what's going on there, but then it may slow down as you start pay more attention to this act of walking.

See if you can walk slowly. No need to rush now. When you rush you miss so much. Can you notice the feeling of touch when your foot meets the earth? Notice if it's a soft or springy kind of touch, or rather hard. Is the surface you're walking on even or uneven?

As you take a step, you might breathe in and as you take another step, you might breathe out. You can use words such as 'slow' and 'down' with each breath and each step, or 'calm' and 'peace'. See if that helps you to stay in the moment more, feeling each foot touching the earth, and the felt sense of your body as they do.

If you are walking outside, you might broaden your attention out a little and begin to notice things around you. You can choose, if you wish, to stop for a moment and to really watch something that has grabbed your attention, feeling how it is to be still and to just watch

whatever is happening unfold in front of you. Maybe you notice the clouds moving through the sky, or a bird busy building a nest. Maybe it's something that you hear around you: the birds tweeting, people having conversations, or do you feel the sun or slight breeze on your face? Maybe you're still walking slowly and you are becoming more awake to what is happening in and around you in each moment.

Maybe for you it's more useful to come back into your body fully and be just with the act of walking now: "this step...and this step".

Relax into your body and enjoy this simple act of walking.

Each step you take can bring you into this moment - the best moment you can be in - the present moment.

How do you feel as you walk now? What have you learnt about yourself in this practice? What did you notice? Maybe much more than you normally would.

Know that you can practice this whenever and wherever you are out walking, to slow you down and to help you become more present.

See you next time.