

Walking Meditation

One way to reduce stress is to try to be present rather than focused on what is coming next. One way to be present is to meditate. For those who don't have time for 'sitting meditation', 'walking meditation' may be for you.

Walking Meditation is a wonderful initiation for beginners into the art of Meditation. It is easy to practice, and enhances both physical, mental and spiritual well-being. It is especially effective for those who find it difficult to sit still for long periods of time. Some people enjoy practicing in a beautiful outdoor setting, like a park. Others prefer to practice indoors, due to poor weather, or desire for privacy.

Walking Meditation should generally be practiced for between 15 minutes to 1 hour. A 20 minute walking meditation can also be used as a break between two 20 minute sitting meditations, allowing 1 hour of meditation without placing undue demands on the practitioner.

You can practice indoors by walking around the perimeter of your largest room. If you practice outdoors choose a scenic and quiet setting. Walk without a destination. Wander aimlessly without arriving, being somewhere rather than going somewhere.

Start out walking a little faster than normal, and gradually slow down to a normal walking speed, and then continue to slow down until you start to feel artificial or off balance.

Speed up just enough to feel comfortable, physically and psychologically. At first you may need to walk fairly fast to feel smooth in your gait, but with practice, as your balance improves, you should be able to walk more slowly.

Be mindful of your breathing, without trying to control it. Allow the breath to become diaphragmatic if possible, but always make sure your breathing feels natural, not artificial. Allow the breath to become circular, and fluid.

Walk with 'soft vision' allowing the eyes to relax and focus upon nothing, while aware of everything. Smile softly with your eyes. Gradually allow the smile to spread from your eyes to your face and throughout your body. This is called an "organic smile" or a "thalamus smile". Imagine every cell of your body smiling softly. Let all worry and sadness fall away from you as you walk.

Walk in silence, both internal and external.

Be mindful of your walking, make each step a gesture, so that you move in a state of grace, and each footprint is an impression of the peace and love you feel for the universe. Walk with slow, small, deliberate, balanced, graceful foot steps.

After a while, when both the breath and the walking have slipped into a regular pattern of their own accord, become aware of the number of footsteps per breath. Make no effort to change the breath, rather lengthen or shorten the rhythm of your step just enough so that you have 2, 3 or 4 steps per inhalation and 2, 3 or 4 steps per exhalation. Once you have discovered your natural rhythm, lock into it, so that the rhythm of the walking sets the rhythm for the breath like a metronome.

After several weeks of regular practice you may experiment with the ratios adding a foot step to your exhalation and later to your inhalation as well. Whatever ratio of steps-to-breath that you settle on, it should feel comfortable, and you should be able to maintain it for the duration of the meditation comfortably. After several months you may find your lung capacity improving. If you are comfortable, lengthen your breath an extra step but avoid trying to slow the breath too much or you will do more harm than good.

Notice the beauty of your surroundings, both externally and internally. Smile with every cell in your body.

**Adapted from <http://www.yogateacher.com/text/meditation/on-line/walking.html>