



Mindfulness Teacher Training Course – Stage 1, Week 3

Mindful Walking Meditation

Overview

There are four traditional meditation postures: sitting, used in the mindfulness of breathing meditation, lying as in the body scan; standing as in mindful movement; and walking. Walking can be either a Formal or Informal mindfulness practice.

Mindful Walking as a Formal Meditation Practice

To use walking formally you simply follow the steps in the Walking Meditation script below. Try not to "read the script" while doing the walking meditation. While you probably won't carry a piece of paper around with you, you may still read off the instructions to yourself while doing the walking meditation. Avoid this if possible. Just feel what your body is doing. Don't say "feel your legs" in your mind's voice. Do you see the difference?

Mindful Walking as an Informal Meditation Practice

To use walking as an informal mindfulness practice you simply use the Representation Systems (V.A.K.G.O.), this is your five senses that you learned about in week 1. Continually use your five senses to deeply experience the present moment, as you walk. Ask yourself what do I see / hear /feel/taste/smell right now. Spend approximately 15 seconds on each sense before you move onto the next one. When you are doing Mindful Walking don't listen to music etc as you walk. That is mindful listening, not mindful walking. Engaging all 5 of your senses will give you a whole brain experience, that brings you deeply into the present moment.

Remember also from week 1 you learned that the mind wanders approximately 47% of the time. When you become aware that the mind has wandered away from the sensations of walking, gently move it back to the sensations in the feet and legs, noticing the points where the feet meet the ground as an 'anchor', a way of coming back to the present moment, just as you used the breath as an anchor in previous weeks.

If the mind is very agitated on a particular day, it may be helpful to stop for a moment, and just stand, breathing, until both mind and body re- stabilise themselves and you can resume the mindful walking. It's best to allow approximately twenty minutes for your mindfulness walk. At first, walk at a pace that is slower than usual to give yourself a better chance to pay full attention to the sensations of walking. When you feel more comfortable walking slowly and with awareness, you can experiment with walking faster, up
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to and beyond normal walking speed. If you're feeling agitated or unsettled, it might be helpful to begin walking fast, with awareness, and then slow down as you begin to relax.

After some time of following the formal practice of mindful walking using the Formal Mindful Walking Script below, it will become easier to drop into an awareness of the sensations of walking during daily life. That opens up opportunities for the informal mindful practice throughout the day. Why not use your five senses when walking from your desk to visit a colleague on another floor, for example, or while going to get a drink, you could practise some mindful walking. Perhaps pay full attention while walking from your car to your desk, or a walk on the way to the office. You can even pay full attention while walking down the stairs at home or walking outside in your garden – all these can be good opportunities to practise mindful walking.

Such simple practices, fitting naturally into the flow of the day, can have a significant impact on your mood and vitality. Taking your attention away from the endless flow of thoughts and being aware of the sensations of the body while it's moving can be really uplifting. Remember that this meditation is intended to bring you to the present moment - to remain in the here and now as long as possible. You do this by being present for just a couple of seconds at a time....then another few seconds.....then a few more. And this all adds up to minutes and hours over time.

The walking meditation method is best practiced after reading the script. Let the process become familiar before you attempt the meditation.



Formal Mindful Walking Meditation

1. Stand on the spot, and be aware of your weight being transferred through the soles of your feet into the ground. Be aware of all of the delicate movements that go on in order to keep us balanced and upright. We often take this for granted.
2. Start walking at a normal pace. Try not to change the way you walk, simply be aware of the way you walk. Your body may wobble a little when you become aware of yourself. That's natural.
3. When beginning your session, keep your attention on the soles of your feet, being aware of the constant patterns of landing and lifting off. Be aware of your foot as the heel first makes contact, your foot then rolls forward onto the front (the ball), and then lifts and travels through the air again. Visualise your feet going through this pattern as you walk.
4. Try to be aware of all the different sensations in your feet, not just a contact in the soles of your feet but the connection between the toes, the sensation of the inside of your shoes, and the fabric of your socks.
5. Let your feet be as relaxed as you can. Become aware of your ankles. Let your ankle joints be relaxed- become aware of your lower legs, shins, and calves.

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6. Try to be aware of their contact with your clothing, the temperature on your skin; and the muscles. Notice what the calf muscles are doing.
7. Expand your awareness into your thighs, feel your skin, your clothing, the temperature. Be aware of the front and rear thigh muscles. Be aware of the whole of the pelvis - and notice all of the movements that are going on your pelvis. One side of the hip moves forward and then the other; one hip lifting, the other sinking.
8. What temperature is your stomach? Make a mental note that your stomach is the centre of your body, and it's pretty central when you walk.
9. Notice your chest, and just let your breathing occur. Notice the connection that your chest makes with your clothing.
10. Notice your shoulders. Try to see how they are moving with your rhythm. They move opposite to your hips. Have your arms simply hanging by your sides and swinging naturally.
12. Notice all the wonderful motions in your arms, what are your upper arms doing. That means your elbows, forearms, wrists, and hands.
13. Become aware of your neck - and the muscles supporting your skull. It doesn't hurt to notice the angle of your head.
14. This next one is big. Relax your jaw. Relax your eyes and just let your eyes be softly focused, varying how far you look ahead. Look directly in front then scan ahead until you hit the skyline. Remember; don't bother yourself with focusing on anything that's speeding past you.
15. Lastly, come to a natural stop and just experience yourself standing. Just notice what it's like to no longer be mobile. Notice once more the multifaceted balancing act that's going on to keep you upright. Feeling once again, the weight travelling down through the soles of your feet into the earth; simply standing, and experiencing yourself.
16. Congratulate yourself at the end of the mindful walk, however it went. What was important was your intention to be mindful rather than how mindful and focused you actually were.

Important notes

1. It's easy to be "in your head" while doing the walking meditation. Put differently, don't allow the thoughts of "getting this walking meditation right" interfere with you being in the present moment.
2. Mindful walking is a very good meditation practice if you are stressed after a busy day as doing a sitting or lying meditation may be more difficult to do.
3. Walking meditation is an external form of mindfulness practice, which focuses the attention on the reality of what's happening in the present moment. It is therefore a very useful meditation for clients who have a tendency towards rumination or worrying, as the use of the five senses helps them experience the present moment in a very direct manner.