

A12. Mindful Walking Exercise

Start by standing with your feet flat on the ground, and bring your attention to the soles of your feet. [Pause.] Wiggle your toes if this helps to focus your awareness. [Pause.] Start to become aware of your weight passing through the soles of your feet into the ground. Notice all the delicate movements that happen in order to keep us balanced and upright. [Pause.]

Now, start walking at a slow pace. Try not to change the way you walk; simply be aware of the way you are walking. [Pause.] Your body may do a funny wobble as soon as you become aware of yourself. Don't worry, that's a natural effect. [Pause five seconds.]

Direct your attention to the soles of your feet, being aware of the constant patterns of landing and lifting. [Pause five seconds.] Be aware of your foot as the heel first contacts the ground. Notice how your foot rolls forward onto the ball, and then lifts and travels through the air again. [Pause.] Visualize your feet going through this pattern as you walk. [Pause five seconds.]

Try to be aware of all the different sensations in your feet [pause], not just the contact with the soles of your feet but the connection between the toes [pause], and the sensation of your feet against the fabric of your socks or shoes. [Pause.] Try to let your feet be as relaxed as possible. [Pause five seconds.]

Now, direct your attention to your ankles. [Pause.] Notice the sensation in your joints. Allow your ankles to be relaxed. Try not to resist the movement of your ankles in any way. Now, become aware of your lower legs [pause], your shins [pause], and your calves as you walk. [Pause five seconds.]

You might notice that your mind wanders while doing this exercise. This is common, and it may happen again and again. If it does, try to bring your attention back to the exercise of walking and focusing on your body. [Pause five seconds.]

Now, expand your awareness to your thighs [pause]; notice how your clothing feels on your skin. [Pause.] Be aware of the front and rear thigh muscles. [Pause.] Become aware of the whole of your pelvis [pause], and notice all the movements that are going on in your pelvis as you walk. Notice how one hip moves forward, and then the other [pause]; one hip lifts, the other sinks, and you walk. [Pause.] Just keep walking and noticing your body as you do this exercise. [Pause five seconds.]

Next, notice your shoulders. [Pause.] Try to see how they are moving in rhythm as you walk. [Pause.] Are they moving opposite to your hips? Are your arms simply hanging by your sides and swinging naturally? [Pause five seconds.]

Lastly, come to a natural stop and just experience yourself standing. [Pause.] Notice what it's like to no longer be mobile. [Pause five seconds.] Notice once more the balancing act that's going on to keep you upright. [Pause.] Feel once again the weight traveling down through the soles of your feet into the ground. Congratulate yourself for your intention to practice mindful walking, no matter how many times your mind was pulled away from the walk, or how "well" you thought your practice went today. Just notice that the intention to be mindful is the key to practice. Welcome back.