

A WALKING MEDITATION PRACTICE

Walking meditation is a simple widely useful practice for training the mind and body, and is a calm, easy way to develop awareness. It can be practiced before or after sitting meditation or any time on its own. In this practice, an individual can cultivate mindfulness. It is a good first step to practicing meditation in action without social engagement or a host of other potential distractions.

Find a relatively quiet place to walk comfortably back and forth for about ten to thirty paces without having to turn. This could be inside or outside. You could also take a walk along a natural path on which you know you won't be interrupted by needing to cross a street or encounter some other interference.

Begin the meditative walking practice with awareness of standing and make a conscious decision to begin. Allow your arms to be natural or find a way to place them that is easy and won't disturb you. Take in your surroundings. Allow yourself be present in the moment and alert.

When beginning, walk a tad more slowly than usual. Let your walking be easy and natural; go for a pleasant stroll. Pay attention to your body. Feel the sensation of lifting each foot, swinging that leg through, and setting that foot down. When you reach the end of your path, pause to carefully turn. Be aware of the first step that sets you on your return direction.

As in sitting meditation practice, your attention will wander. This is the nature of the mind and is nothing to be concerned about. When you notice, just acknowledge it. If you like you can practice labeling, mentally stating something like, "wandering," "hearing," "planning." Then return to awareness of the step you are taking.

Once you spend some time practicing in a quiet peaceful environment, then you are ready to take the practice to other settings, like walking in the mall or around the neighborhood. This is a great alternative to sitting meditation for those for whom sitting meditation may not be the best practice. It is also a great way to gently introduce the practice of meditation in action.