



Mindful walking

The purpose of this exercise is to walk mindfully. Start by finding a place where you can walk a route of 5 or 10 steps backwards and forwards without anyone watching or disturbing you. If you want to and if it feels pleasant, you can take off your shoes and socks so that you can feel the floor or ground under your feet.

Stand with your feet hip width apart and facing the same direction, and your knees slightly bent. Let your arms hang beside you or hold your hands gently together in front of or behind your body and look straight ahead. When you're ready, focus attention on the soles of your feet. Feel the physical sensations that occur as your feet touch the floor or ground. Notice how your body weight rests on your thighs, calves and feet and pushes down all the way to the ground.

Next, let your weight transfer to your right leg, then let your left leg lift off the ground and move it forward. Lower your leg to the ground and feel how your body weight moves forward onto the left foot as your right leg leaves the ground. Move the right leg forward and lower it to the ground. Focus attention on your right leg and foot as the weight shifts to them, while you notice how your left leg begins to rise off the ground.

Slowly walk with this awareness from one end of the route to the other. You don't need to walk extremely slowly. You can walk at the pace that most clearly allows you to concentrate on lifting, moving and lowering each leg in turn. Quietly say in your mind as you do this: "my leg is rising, ...my leg is stepping,my foot is going down".

Stop for a moment when you reach the end of the route. Turn around slowly. Appreciate the complicated movements that your body uses to change direction. After turning, stop again for a moment before you continue walking. Clearly feel the sensations in your legs as they rise, move and step. Walk in time to your breathing. As you inhale, lift and move your leg. As you exhale, set your foot down on the ground and transfer your weight to it.

If you notice your mind wandering away from the sensations in your legs, observe where it has gone and then bring your attention gently back to your legs. Use the sensations in your legs as an anchor that brings your attention back to your body and the sensations of walking. If your mind is very restless or continuously wanders, you can stop for a moment and just stand firmly in place. Be aware of your breathing, your whole body and your environment. Continue mindful walking when you feel ready again.

You could try to expand your awareness to the whole body while walking. Observe the sensations in your body as you walk. Remember that you can always return to observing the sensations in the soles of your feet if your mind begins to wander.

At some point, you can expand your awareness to the environment around your body. Notice the air movements on your skin when you move, the sounds around you and how your body feels as it moves through space. If your mind continuously wanders, you can stop at any time. Simply focus attention on the sensations in the soles of your feet as they touch the ground while you're walking.

As you finish up the exercise, remember that you can ground yourself at any time when you're moving around outdoors or indoors during the day. You can approach ordinary walking in the same way as you approach this exercise.
