

Mindful walking

The important part of practising mindful walking is not to help us get from A to B, but rather in this exercise we are paying attention to the process of walking itself. When we start practising mindful walking we only need to walk a short distance perhaps 5 to 10 paces. You can practise inside or outdoors wherever you are able to walk back and forth without disruption.

At the beginning mindful walking is practised at a very slow pace, focusing your attention on all the bodily processes involved in taking a step. As you get more comfortable with doing this practise you can try doing mindful walking at different speeds.

To start you need to stand with your feet about shoulder width apart. Try to tune your attention to the sensations you are feeling in your body and then focus your attention more specifically on the sensations in your feet and legs.

If your mind wanders just note the distracting thought and bring your attention back to your feet and legs.

Now move your weight onto one foot. Notice the sensations that you feel in your legs, the lightness and heaviness of each leg. Just notice the feeling whether it is pressure, tension, tingling or hardness.

Now slowly lift your foot and place it on the floor in front of you, shifting all of your weight onto it and feeling the changing sensations of the shifting muscles as they come in contact with the floor.

When you are ready move all of your weight onto the other foot again noticing the changing sensations in each of your legs and feet.

As you come to the end of your walking path or need to change your direction, first be aware of standing and then direct your attention to the process of turning as you change direction.

Try to stay focused on the experience of walking and the sensations in your legs and feet. When your mind wanders, bring your attention back to the sensations of movement.

Try walking at different speeds that help you to stay mindful. If your mind is upset or racing try to walk at a faster pace for a while. As your mind becomes more settled you can slow down. By experimenting with walking at different speeds you can find the speed that best allows you to walk naturally with awareness.