

MINDFUL WALKING GUIDE

So let's begin. There are many approaches to mindful walking, but this one here is a quick version that you can do anywhere you like and at whatever walking pace you choose. Follow each of these cues for about 30 to 60 seconds before moving on to the next one.

Tune in to your body

As you start to walk, notice how the body feels. Heavy or light, stiff or relaxed? Take a few seconds to become aware of your posture and the way you're carrying yourself.

Focus on your footsteps

Without trying to change the way you're walking, simply observe your gait. Bring your attention to it. This can sometimes make you feel self-conscious, but that feeling usually passes.

Turn on your awareness

Start to tune into what's going on around you — passing cars, other people, window displays, trees, the movement of things, the sound of people talking, the smell of flowers, or anything else that comes into your awareness field. Take in all the sights, sounds and smells, especially those you would not normally notice. You're not thinking about any of these things, though; you're simply acknowledging what you see.

Notice sights, sounds and smells

Notice the people passing by; the buildings; the colour of the doorways; look up at the sky, the tops of buildings...be curious!

Actively listen. Notice the sounds that drift in. What can you hear? Again, try to be aware of sounds but not dwell on them.

Now turn your attention to any smells, whether pleasant or unpleasant. Notice how the mind habitually wants to create a story out of each smell and how it might remind you of somewhere, something, or someone.

Observe physical sensations

Next, make a point of noticing any physical sensations, from how the weather makes you feel to how it feels as the sole of your feet touch the ground. There's still no need to think about any of these observations. Simply notice, acknowledge, and let go.

Mind your movement

After a minute or two, contemplate the sensation of movement in the body: how the arms hang or swing by your side or how the weight steadily shifts from right to left. Observe your stride, your pace, and the rhythm you've become accustomed to.

Focus on your rhythm

Use that rhythm — the soles of the feet touching the ground — as your base of awareness, a place you can mentally come back to when the mind wanders off. Repeat this throughout your walk, step by step, block by block, or mile by mile.

Make it a habit

These steps are guidelines, not rules, so adapt them to fit your walk, wherever you go or however long it takes. For example, on a walk that takes 10 minutes, you might use a street-by-street basis. At the beginning of each block, remind yourself of your intention to walk, free from distraction, until you reach the next cross-roads or junction. As soon as you realise the mind has wandered, gently bring your attention back to the sensation of the soles of your feet.