

## PREFACE

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"The first concern of all music in one way or another is to shatter the indifference of hearing, the callousness of sensibility, to create that moment of solution we call poetry, our rigidity dissolved when we occur reborn—in a sense hearing for the first time."

—Lucia Dlugoszewski<sup>2</sup>

Deep Listening is an evolving practice that comes from my experience as a composer, performer, improviser and audience member. My training in music was generally centered on techniques for how to perform and appreciate music of the past. This type of education is generally true for most music students. Encouragement for composing or improvising and appreciation for new music was almost nonexistent in my earliest musical training. Most students do not realize that they have creative potential to make their own music as well as learning to perform traditional music.

I was always fascinated with listening to my environment. From early childhood I have been a listener. I grew up in a time when there existed a very rich and dense *soundscape*<sup>3</sup> of insects, birds and animals in Houston Texas in the 1930s. This soundscape was filled with chirping, rasping crickets, frogs and melodic mocking birds. Sounds of the natural environment still engage my attention.

Now in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, that soundscape is considerably thinned out by asphalt, concrete pavements and building developments. Houston still has cicadas in stereophonic corridors as you walk or drive the streets but the frogs have mostly disappeared, leaving their sonic niches unfilled except for the sounds of combustion engines. A modern technological soundscape has emerged.

In high school I became acquainted with inner listening—an altered state of consciousness full of inner sounds that engaged my attention and eventually made me want to compose. At the age of sixteen I announced that I wanted to be a composer. I was in love with sounds and to be a composer was my passion. Never mind that I did not know how to go about transmitting my inner sounds to outer form, I knew that composing was my path.

My instrumental training included accordion and French horn. On my accordion I performed a diverse repertoire including classical, baroque, popular and ethnic music. I played the horn in bands and orchestras—even in a large dance band!

Composing continued, and at the age of nineteen my attempts were finally successful when I managed to write a piano piece in two parts. Listening and notating were intense and a struggle for me. I became more and more absorbed in composing.

Robert Erickson,<sup>4</sup> my composition mentor, encouraged me to improvise<sup>5</sup> my music. I began to improvise and to record the results if I was stuck in writing a piece. Eventually improvisation became a way to get my ideas flowing.

In 1960, nine years after I had composed my first piece, I won the Pacifica Foundation award for my *Variations for Sextet*.<sup>6</sup> Alfred Frankenstein, the music critic for the San Francisco Chronicle, championed my work and my career as a composer was launched.

Through the sixties I became absorbed in electronic music making. With this medium I began to find the sounds that interested me and were most similar to the sounds in my inner listening. Two of my pieces from this period—*I of IV*<sup>7</sup> and *Bye Bye Butterfly*<sup>8</sup> were released on recordings and have become classics of the period. *Bye Bye Butterfly* was named the best piece of the 1960s by John Rockwell of the New York Times.<sup>9</sup>

Validation by peers and critics and the small cash prize from Pacifica Foundation were encouraging and appreciated by me. I was no longer alone with my passion to compose, and I continued. That is why I feel it so important to educate, nourish and encourage young composers today. I also like to encourage people without musical training to engage in improvisation to experience making their own music.

I began teaching electronic music at the University of California San Diego (UCSD) in 1967. I was one of the few who could teach electronic music—a field still relatively new to curriculum in American educational institutions. I established the electronic music program for graduate study at UCSD.

During my tenure at UCSD I taught *The Nature of Music*<sup>10</sup>—a large course for the general student (a course originally devised by my colleague Wilbur Ogden.<sup>11</sup> This course was hands-on. Every student was expected to compose and improvise, even though most had no musical training. It was our conviction that appreciation would develop through participation in music making.

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I composed *Sonic Meditations*<sup>12</sup>—a body of work that could be done by persons without musical training. *Sonic Meditations* are based on patterns of attention. In other words these pieces are ways of listening and responding. *Sonic Meditations* is the basis of Deep Listening.

I noticed that many musicians were not listening to what they were performing! There was good hand-eye coordination in reading music, but listening was not necessarily a part of the performance. The musician was of course hearing but listening all over or attention<sup>13</sup> to the space/time continuum (global) was not happening. There was disconnection from the environment that included the audience as the music was played. Observing these phenomena prompted me to investigate human attention processes and strategies.

I began with myself. I started to sing and play long tones, and to listen and observe how these tones affected me mentally and physically. I noticed that I could change my emotional state by concentrating my attention on a tone. I noticed that I could feel my body responding with relaxation or tension. Prolonged practice brought about a heightened state of awareness that gave me a sense of well-being.

In 1967 I wrote an article for Source Magazine: Music of the Avant-garde<sup>14</sup> titled *Some Sound Observations*. The article described the journey of listening to what was happening around me and to memories and ideas that were triggered by this listening.

Soon I was involving my students in exercises designed to bring their attention to listening through observation and sounding. Some of these results may be found in *Software for People: Collected Essays 1962-1980*.<sup>15</sup>

*"I sit quietly with my alarm clock, close my eyes and open my ears. At this point the curtain rises and the performance begins. My very surroundings seem to come alive, each sound revealing the personality of its creator. There are several sounds, which become fixed in my ear like some "basso ostinato": the continuous whirrings of factory machinery in the distance and the hollow sound of plopping water in a nearby fountain. This background of sound is interrupted by the piercing motif of a bird. A sudden breath of air sweeps across the deck. The pages of my book respond with quick snapping sounds. The door at the entrance squeaks and moans on the same pitch like an old rocking chair then closes with a thud. I can hear the drapery from an opened window rustling against the coarse plastered walls, while the drawing cord syncopates against the window pane".*

While still at UCSD I initiated research at the Project for Music Experiment.<sup>16</sup> Meditation Project<sup>17</sup> met five days a week for nine weeks for four hours a day in the winter of 1972 with twenty participants. We studied mind, body and dream practices from a variety of guests and performed pieces from *Sonic Meditations* daily. This research project seeded Deep Listening practice.

I left UCSD in 1981 and moved to Upstate New York. I was attracted by the rich variety of musical activity in the Hudson Valley and the diversity of traditional meditation practices available. I studied Zen, Tibetan Buddhism, Yoga and Taoist forms from accomplished teachers.<sup>18</sup> These studies deepened my understanding and appreciation for meditation and confirmed my own practice as a composer and improviser.

I led my first Deep Listening Retreat in 1991 at the Rose Mountain Retreat Center<sup>19</sup> in Las Vegas, New Mexico, at the invitation of Andy and Heloise Gold. This retreat took place in a lovely mountain area at eight thousand feet above sea level. The Center is in a relatively unspoiled location with very little technological sound intrusion except for occasional jet airliners. There is no local traffic. The location was inspiring for listening.

I committed myself to ten years of retreats at Rose Mountain and developed the forms of practice that are described in this book. Each Retreat lasts for one week and proposes listening twenty-four hours a day. This includes listening through dreaming as well as waking. A period of silence or non-verbal time is included each day.

Teaching with me at Rose Mountain were Heloise Gold (training creative movement, T'ai Chi,<sup>20</sup> and Chi Kung<sup>21</sup>), and Ione (Listening Through Dreaming<sup>22</sup>).

Deep Listening Retreats were also held for five years in Switzerland,<sup>23</sup> one in Canada<sup>24</sup> and one in Washington State.<sup>25</sup> As the number of participants returning each year increased, I answered a request for an advanced level by creating a Three Year Certificate program<sup>26</sup> in 1995. The first Certificates were awarded to six people<sup>27</sup> in 1998. The certificate qualifies the holder to teach a Deep Listening Workshop.

Deep Listening Workshops are held all over the world. Workshops introduce some of the material of the one week Deep Listening Retreat but are more limited in duration and scope. Workshops can be from one hour to a couple of days. Summer Deep Listening Retreats are scheduled in various locations.

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My performances as an improvising composer are especially informed by my Deep Listening practice. I do practice what I preach. When I arrive on stage, I am listening and expanding to the whole of the space/time continuum of perceptible sound. I have no preconceived ideas. What I perceive as the continuum of sound and energy takes my attention and informs what I play. What I play is recognized consciously by me slightly (milliseconds) after I have played any sound.<sup>28</sup> This altered state of consciousness in performance is exhilarating and inspiring. The music comes through as if I have nothing to do with it but allow it to emerge through my instrument and voice. It is even more exciting to practice, whether I am performing or just living out my daily life.

I am pleased to be teaching Deep Listening at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute<sup>29</sup> in Troy New York at beginning and advanced levels, and also at Mills College<sup>30</sup> in Oakland California via virtual presence on-line with video chat and occasional personal visits.

I am also pleased to include essays and quotes in this book by students concerning their practice of Deep Listening.

Pauline Oliveros  
 June 25, 2003

## INTRODUCTION

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Anyone can practice Deep Listening. The form given in this book has evolved from many years of this practice in workshops, retreats and classes.

### **What is Deep Listening?**

This question is answered in the process of practicing listening with the understanding that the complex wave forms continuously transmitted to the auditory cortex from the outside world by the ear require active engagement with attention. Prompted by experience and learning, listening takes place voluntarily. Listening is not the same as hearing and hearing is not the same as listening. The ear is constantly gathering and transmitting information—however attention to the auditory cortex can be tuned out. Very little of the information transmitted to the brain by the sense organs is perceived at a conscious level.<sup>31</sup> Reactions can take place without consciousness.

### **So what is consciousness?**

Consciousness was considered an epiphenomenon by the scientific community and not seriously studied until more recently.<sup>32</sup> Consciousness had no location. Furthermore, evoked potentials in the brain appear up to a half-second<sup>33</sup> before the individual is aware of a stimulus. The brain then remembers the stimulus as happening in the present moment or the immediate instant in one's sense of time. So perception in time is an illusion.

### **So what is consciousness?**

Consciousness is awareness of stimuli and reactions in the moment. Consciousness is acting with awareness, presence and memory. What is learned is retained and retrievable. Information, knowledge of events, feelings and experiences can be brought forward from the past to the present. In this way one has self-recognition.

## The ear makes it possible to hear and to listen.

To hear physically means that vibrations or waveforms that are within the range of human hearing (in frequency typically 16hz to 20,000hz and amplitude 0.05dB to 130dB) can be transmitted to the auditory cortex by the ear and perceived as sounds. However, the word *hear* has many more dynamics and meanings within a cultural history that is continually changing.

To hear according to the Miriam Webster Dictionary can mean "to listen attentively, or that information has been received especially by ear, or to hear somebody or some thing, or to consider something officially as a judge, commissioner, or member of a jury, or to fully understand something, or to attend Mass or hear confession in a Roman Catholic Church".

Listening has very little definition compared to hearing. Though the two words are often used interchangeably, their meanings are different. To listen according to the Miriam Webster Dictionary means "to give attention to sound or sounds or to perceive with the ear, to hear with thoughtful attention, to consider seriously.

To hear and to listen have a symbiotic relationship with somewhat interchangeable common usage.

I differentiate 'to hear' and 'to listen'. To hear is the physical means that enables perception. To listen is to give attention to what is perceived both acoustically and psychologically.

"Hearing turns a certain range of vibrations into perceptible sounds."<sup>34</sup>

Listening takes place in the auditory cortex<sup>35</sup> and is based on the experience of the waveforms transmitted by the ear to the brain. We learn to associate and categorize sounds such as mama, papa, meow, running water, whistles, pops, clicks and myriads more sounds through experience. Many waveforms after first experience are discarded unnoticed without conscious interpretation. Understanding and interpreting what the ear transmits to the brain is a process developing from instantaneous survival reactions to ideas that drive consciousness. The listening process continues throughout one's lifetime.

Physical descriptions of sound properties and listening do not explicate the phenomenal world of perception that takes place in the auditory cortex. According

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to Stephen Handel in *Listening: An Introduction to the Perception of Auditory Events*,<sup>36</sup> "There is no sound pressure variation that will always lead to one and only one perception". Similarly, there is no perception that always comes from one and only one pressure variation.

Physicists then continue to study the nature of physical descriptions of sound and psychologists the perception of sound. Physicists can measure acoustics and pressure waves. Psychologists must measure the experience of the listeners. Thus neither discipline can solve auditory perception. Sound pressure patterns assist hearing but cultural history and experience influences listening.

### So what is Deep Listening?

"Acoustic space is where time and space merge as they are articulated by sound."<sup>37</sup>

*Deep* has to do with complexity and boundaries, or edges beyond ordinary or habitual understandings—i.e. "the subject is too deep for me" or "she is a deep one". A subject that is "too deep" surpasses one's present understanding or has too many unknown parts to grasp easily. A "deep one" defies stereotypical knowing and may take either a long time, or never to understand or get to know.

*Deep* coupled with *Listening* or *Deep Listening* for me is learning to expand the perception of sounds to include the whole space/time continuum of sound—encountering the vastness and complexities as much as possible. Simultaneously one ought to be able to target a sound or sequence of sounds as a focus within the space/time continuum and to perceive the detail or trajectory of the sound or sequence of sounds. Such focus should always return to, or be within the whole of the space/time continuum (context).

Such expansion means that one is connected to the whole of the environment and beyond.

### What's the difference between Deep Listening and meditation?

**Deep Listening** is a practice that is intended to heighten and expand consciousness of sound in as many dimensions of awareness and attentional dynamics as humanly possible.

The source for Deep Listening as a practice comes from my background and experience as a composer of concert music, as a performer and improviser.



Deep Listening comes from noticing my listening or listening to my listening and discerning the effects on my bodymind<sup>38</sup> continuum, from listening to others, to art and to life.

Deep Listening is a practice and term that does not come from any religious context, even though religious practitioners sometimes use the words. Thich Nhat Hanh is a Zen Buddhist monk whose usage of the term "deep listening"<sup>39</sup> has a specific context as one of the "Five Mindfulness Trainings" that he proposes. This is a compassion-centered listening to restore communication in order to relieve suffering and bring happiness to all beings. Listening (as a practice in this sense) would be training to respond with calmness and clarity of mind. It is a determination and commitment to reconcile and resolve conflicts.

**Meditation** in all the meanings of the word is found and defined in diverse religions and spiritual practices. Meditation is used in all its rich variety of meanings to calm the mind and to promote receptivity or concentration.

In religious settings, attention is directed to moral and ethical issues, values, beliefs and tenets of the particular faith and to connection with the divine, or a divine being, or beings.

Whether one is dwelling on something carefully and continually, or engaging in a serious study of a particular topic, planning or considering an action, meditation both religious and secular is attention engaged in particular ways. There is emptying, expansion and contraction of the mind; there is relaxation or "letting go" and focus (attention to a point). Meditation implies discipline and control. There is something to practice!

**Deep Listening is a form of meditation.** Attention is directed to the interplay of sounds and silences or the sound/silence continuum. Sound is not limited to musical or speaking sounds, but is inclusive of all perceptible vibrations (sonic formations). The relationship of all perceptible sounds is important.

The practice is intended to **expand consciousness** to the whole space/time continuum of sound/silences. Deep Listening is a process that extends the listener to this continuum as well as to focus instantaneously on a single sound (engagement to targeted detail) or sequences of sound/silence.

In order to acquire the discipline and control that meditation develops, relaxation as well as concentration is essential. The practice of Deep Listening is intended to

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Pauline Olivero  
June 24, 2003

facilitate creativity in art and life through this form of meditation. Creativity means the formation of new patterns, exceeding the limitations and boundaries of old patterns, or using old patterns in new ways.

**Animals are Deep Listeners.** When you enter an environment where there are birds, insects or animals, they are listening to you completely. You are received. Your presence may be the difference between life and death for the creatures of the environment. Listening is survival!

**Humans have ideas.** Ideas drive consciousness forward to new perceptions and perspectives.

**Sounds carry intelligence.** Ideas, feelings and memories are triggered by sounds. If you are too narrow in your awareness of sounds, you are likely to be disconnected from your environment. More often than not, urban living causes narrow focus and disconnection. Too much information is coming into the auditory cortex, or habit has narrowed listening to only what seems of value and concern to the listener. All else is tuned out or discarded as garbage.

**Compassion** (spiritual development) and **understanding** comes from listening impartially to the whole space/time continuum of sound, not just what one is presently concerned about. In this way, discovery and exploration can take place. New fields of thought can be opened and the individual may be expanded and find opportunity to connect in new ways to communities of interest. Practice enhances openness.

The level of awareness of soundscape brought about by Deep Listening can lead to the possibility of shaping the sound of technology and of urban environments. Deep Listening designers, engineers and city planners could enhance the quality of life as well as sound artists, composers and musicians.

Pauline Oliveros  
June 24, 2003

## Extreme Slow Walk

### The Exercise

Moving as slowly as possible, step forward with the heel to the ground first, let the weight of the body shift along the outside edge of the foot to the small toe and across to the large toe.

As the weight of the body fully aligns with that foot then begin the transition of shifting to the other foot.

Small steps are recommended as balance may be challenged.

Maintain good posture, with shoulders relaxed and head erect.

Use your breathing.

The challenge for this exercise is that no matter how slow you are walking, you can always go much slower.

### Commentary

The purpose of the exercise is to challenge your normal pattern or rhythm of walking so that you can learn to reconnect with very subtle energies in the body as the weight shifts from side to side in an extremely slow walk.

You may discover the point-to-point connections of movement and/or the merging into the experience of flow.

The extreme slow walk may be practiced any time. Variations that are added in class:

- Walk with music.

- Walk with eyes closed.

- Walk singing long tones—one per breath.

- Walk backwards.

- Walk with the big toe coming down first then over to the small toe. Weight shifts to the heel. Knees are bent as if stalking something.

## Cross Overs (1996)

Sound a word or a sound.  
Listen—surprise.

Sound a word as a sound.  
Sound a sound as a word.

Sound a sound until it is a word.  
Sound a word until it is a sound.

Sound a sentence of sounds.  
Sound a phrase of words.

April 2, 1996  
Evanston, Illinois

## LISTENING QUESTIONS

*"The world of possibilities is sound"*

- 1 What is your earliest memory of sound? How do you feel about it now?
- 2 When do you notice your breath?
- 3 What is attention?
- 4 Can you imagine composing or improvising a piece based on breath rhythms?
- 5 What sound reminds you of home?
- 6 Do you listen for sound in your dreams? What do you hear? How does it affect you?
- 7 The distinguished historian, William H. McNeil, has recently argued in his book *Keeping Together in Time* that "coordinated rhythmical activity is fundamental to life in society."  
Can you imagine tracking a rhythm pattern in your daily life and writing about it?
- 8 Can you imagine a rhythm pattern for the rhythm circle with your own form of notation?
- 9 Can you imagine composing or improvising a piece for voices using attention patterns?
- 10 What is sound?
- 11 What is listening?
- 12 What action(s) is usually synchronized with sound?
- 13 When do you feel sound in your body?
- 14 What sound fascinates you?
- 15 What is a soundscape?
- 16 What are you hearing right now? How is it changing?
- 17 How many sounds can you hear all at once?
- 18 How far away can you hear sounds?

- 19 Are you sure that you are hearing every thing that there is to hear?
- 20 What more could you hear if you had bigger ears? (or smaller)
- 21 Can you hear more sounds if you are quiet? How many more?
- 22 How long can you listen?
- 23 When are you not listening?
- 24 Can you not listen when something is sounding?
- 25 Try not listening to anything. What happens?
- 26 How can you not listen if your ears never close?
- 27 What meaning does any sound have for you?
- 28 What is your favorite sound? How is it made? When can you hear it? Are you hearing it now?
- 29 What is the soundscape of the space you are now occupying?
- 30 How is the soundscape shaped? or what makes a soundscape?
- 31 What is the soundscape of your neighborhood?
- 32 What is the soundscape of your city?
- 33 How many different soundscapes can you imagine?
- 34 What would you like to have in your own soundscape?
- 35 What would you record to represent your soundscape?
- 36 What sound makes you speculative?
- 37 What sound gives you chills?
- 38 What sound ruffles your scalp?
- 39 What sound changes your breathing?
- 40 What sound would you like whispered in your ear?

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## APPENDIX

### Reflections and Research into the Slow Walk

by Andrew Taber

The prospect of learning a deeper form of meditation in sound is both intriguing and enticing. It is one that brought me to the eventual enrollment in a class, which, I had no preparation for, and no idea what to expect. I had taken courses at various institutions from leadership training camps to martial arts schools which had taught me a little as to the great powers which meditation holds, but nothing that really dealt strictly with the beauty of calm relaxation and the focus of one or two of the senses on the environment for that very purpose. The various practices to accomplish this have so far ranged from centering exercises, breath compositions, and the slow walk, just to name a few. In particular, the slow walk was very interesting to me. I had previous experience with walking in a sort of meditation, but the meditation was meant to help me focus my body and improve coordination, not to relax and help me become better aware of myself.

Upon beginning the exercise I found that taking note of my movements and trying to slow them down with each step, whilst listening on all that was happening around and maintaining my balance caused me to focus very hard on taking everything one step at a time, literally. The mixture of the soothing music with this was an experience the like of which I have seldom had in the past. It is this, which has sparked an interest to further delve into the meditation practice of the slow walk.

"A slow walk is a form of meditation. Participants are invited to notice their breathing, to place their feet gently on the ground, to move slowly from foot to foot and to appreciate the "beingness" of things along the path."

(<http://www.shalem.org/walk.html>)

As instructed, I began the exercise concentrating on my motion. It was the first time I had really done so for the sake of just relaxing. By feeling the motion

of my feet as they rolled from heel, to blade, to the balls and toes, I was aware for the very first time of the very structure and nature of my feet. How well designed they are for walking, and how functional. It was such a soothing and deep feeling. Then I began to notice the presence of sound, the creaking wood floor beneath my feet, the shuffle of socks against the lacquer, and the swish of jean fabric against itself. The drone of the room echoing its rhythm into the background and the eventual wave of music that came from the stereo. All of these auditory elements combined to play as a sort of soundtrack to the act of walking, which was transformed into an art.

"When you practice walking meditation in the morning, your movements will become smooth and your mind will become alert. You will be more aware of what you are doing all day long. In making decisions, you will find that you are more calm and clear, with more insight and compassion. With each peaceful step you take, all beings, near and far, will benefit."

(Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Long Road Turns To Joy*)

According to the shalom website, "The idea of a slow walk is to do something from which naturally arises healing, wholeness and peace (shalom and shalom)." It is a way to "cultivate one's awareness" of the world around us. A tool that can help us come to greater appreciate all the wonders and gifts of life. This is not to say, however, that one is guaranteed a deep and moving experience. But Sarah Breathnach in her book *Simple Abundance*, warns against such expectations.

"Sometimes we expect to experience immediate transcendence and are disappointed when it seems as if nothing is happening. Let go of expectations and life will unfold, step-by-step."

(Sarah Ban Breathnach, *Simple Abundance, A Daybook of Comfort and Joy*)

Since that class I have done my own slow walk on 4 separate occasions as a means to focus or just clear my mind, and have found that with each successive time, I am able to go deeper and deeper into my relaxed state, to the point where I find it increasingly difficult to "wake up" from my meditations, but not uncomfortably so. And as I have researched more about proper technique and furthering my experience, I have found some very useful and powerful insight into my own abilities.

"Walk as slowly as you can imagine walking. Then slow down even more."

(Tarhang Tulku, *Kum Nye Relaxation*)

to the balls and toes, I was aware for the first time of the structure of my feet. How well designed they are. It has such a soothing and deep feeling. I feel the creaking wood floor beneath my feet, the swish of jean fabric against my legs, the rhythm of the background music and the stereo. All of these auditory elements blend into the act of walking, which was

in the morning, your movements will become alert. You will stay longer. In making decisions, I feel clearer, with more insight and understanding, of all beings, near and far,

*To Joy*)

of a slow walk is to do something that brings peace (shalom and shalom). The world around us. A tool that can help us understand the wonders and gifts of life. This is not to deny the moving experience. But Sarah is against such expectations.

mediate transcendence and are experiencing something happening. Let go of expectations.

*A Daybook of Comfort and Joy*)

on 4 separate occasions as a means of understanding that with each successive time, I am becoming more state, to the point where I find it difficult to sit, but not uncomfortably so. This technique and furthering my experience and insight into my own abilities.

Then slow down even more."

According to "Expanding Paradigms" of Austin, TX, Walking Meditation is a great way for the beginning pupil to get into the art of Meditation. It is probably the easiest to learn initially and to practice. It helps to develop all aspects of health from spiritual to physical and logic or cognitive. When it is used specifically for people with an aversion to static meditation, it can help assist to break through to new heights of awareness. And it is also beneficial in that it is not setting specific (i.e. you can do it just about anywhere with enough calm and privacy to have a successful session).

Some guidelines they give for beginners are as follows. "Walking Meditation should generally be practiced for between 15 minutes to 1 hour. A 20-minute walking meditation can also be used as a break between two 20-minute sitting meditations, allowing 1 hour of meditation without placing undue demands on the practitioner."

In the beginning, it is probably best to become comfortable first with the exercise. You can do this by clearing a room in your house, garage, private back yard, or any other place where you will be alone and relaxed. It is better that you walk without a particular goal or direction, so long as you are safe and have plenty of room to turn, etc. According to Paradigms, it is much better to "wander aimlessly" so that your focus is on the travel instead of the destination.

Fortunately there is no one "correct recipe" for the meditation itself. While some groups like Paradigms recommend to "start out walking a little faster than normal, and gradually slow down to a normal walking speed, and then continue to slow down until you start to feel artificial or off balance", others (with stronger Eastern ties, such as the Tibetan Monks—"The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life, H.H. the Dalai Lama) suggest beginning with a much slower act. They tell of starting with your body at a relaxed standstill, and then speeding up "just enough to feel comfortable, physically and psychologically." This difference in styles is very freeing to the individual or group desirous to use this form of meditation. It allows for those that have a preference to still master the art if they so wish. Some guidelines that are universal to both styles are the need for patience and practice. As with any meditation, it only improves with repetition.

Additionally there are a few key things to be mindful of. First is your balance, because it is impossible to have a successful exercise if you are off and nervous of falling, etc. Second is your breathing, which should be natural and relaxed. Diaphragmatic is the best according to Charles MacInerney, a member of the aforementioned Texas group, it will allow for the most "fluid" breathing patterns, which is optimal for concentration.

That brings up the key to a successful meditation, and that is concentration. Concentration is, above all else, the cornerstone to this exercise. It is what allows you to study your body's movements and feelings, focusing your thoughts, and



maintain your balance and breathing. It is important to pay attention to the manner of your strides, and the awareness of your environment. There are many more detailed suggestions depending on your goal for the meditation, but these elements ring true for all.

As I have combined what I have learned over the past few weeks, and kept record of it both in this writing and in my journal, I have gained a much greater appreciation for this art. And, it has broadened my appreciation for that which is new to me. However, it has also given me a little bit of a glimpse of just how little I know and how much I have yet to learn with regards to meditation, deep listening, and myself. And if there is a word that sums up the way to attain that knowledge, I cannot think of a better one than "practice."

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