

How to do 'AUTO-WALK' ~ Stephanie Nash

00:00:00 Hi, I'm Stephanie Nash and Shinzen has asked me to make a video and post it here where
00:00:11 I share how I taught auto-walk at a retreat of his that I was co-teaching in June of 2019.
00:00:22 He loved how quickly and easily people seemed to get it, so for what it's worth, I offer
00:00:29 it here.
00:00:30 You can think of this as a sensitizing exercise to get a feel for the spontaneity of the automatic
00:00:38 or motor movements that we engage in all day long and also to better appreciate the effortlessness
00:00:46 and bounce.
00:00:48 Okay, so we learn through contrast.
00:00:53 Contrast helps us make distinction.
00:00:55 It's much easier to notice the ease that's there in your arm if you first tense and release
00:01:00 and then compared to the tension, the ease is quite palpable.
00:01:05 So in a similar way, I have set up a contrast between auto-walk and mindful walking or walking
00:01:12 meditation to hopefully help make your experience of the spontaneity of auto-walk be more palpable
00:01:20 for you.
00:01:22 Okay, let's begin.
00:01:24 Okay, so find an area that you can move around in, whether it's one little six-foot patch,
00:01:30 whether you're outside with trees, whether you're in a room with a bunch of chairs, doesn't
00:01:35 matter.
00:01:36 Just find a place where you can do some kind of movement without running into anybody.
00:01:42 And when you're ready, close your eyes and take a nice deep breath in and a big pleasurable
00:01:47 sigh out and just let the body be relaxed and present and feel what the body feels like
00:01:56 standing here now, if the body's balancing here on this place.
00:02:01 And you'll feel the arms hanging at the side.
00:02:04 You'll feel the pressure of the weight of the body on the feet as you contact the floor.
00:02:13 And then allow your weight to move over to one foot, so you're leaning over to one side.
00:02:20 And you'll feel the weight more heavily on that side.
00:02:23 And then slowly shift and feel the shift of weight in the middle.
00:02:28 It's equal pressure on both feet and then move over to the other side.
00:02:33 And just play with shifting your weight from the left foot to the right foot, feeling that
00:02:40 shift of weight back and forth.
00:02:43 And you might notice different muscles engage in the legs.
00:02:48 Notice if you're holding your breath.
00:02:49 See if you can not hold your breath.
00:02:53 Let your breathing just go as you're shifting the weight and feeling all the sensory experience
00:02:59 involved in the weight shifting from the left to the right and back to the left.
00:03:07 And then come to the center.
00:03:10 And slowly open your eyes a little or a lot.

00:03:13 You can keep your gaze down.

00:03:15 You can keep your gaze forward.

00:03:16 And we're going to begin a classic walking meditation, which would be feeling in the

00:03:22 same way we just felt the shift back and forth.

00:03:24 You're going to feel the lift of, say, if you start with your right leg, you're going

00:03:29 to feel the muscles involved in lifting the leg.

00:03:32 The leg's going to swing out.

00:03:34 And then there's going to be a shift of weight forward as the weight goes from the back foot

00:03:38 to the first foot, probably the heel first and then the toe.

00:03:42 Feel that shift of weight.

00:03:44 And as you get there, the back leg lifts up and it swings forward.

00:03:50 So continue with it.

00:03:51 It's like slow motion walking where you're really feeling the contact of the foot on

00:03:57 the ground.

00:03:58 You're feeling the weight come down onto it, the shift of weight, muscles involved in lifting.

00:04:04 So it'll be lift, swing, place, shift.

00:04:08 So just play for a moment.

00:04:11 And this is a classic.

00:04:12 There are many ways to teach walking meditation.

00:04:15 I tend to do something a little more fluid than the one, two, three, four step.

00:04:19 But I want to just take us to something that's quite tangible and that you're probably familiar

00:04:23 with.

00:04:24 So lifting, swinging, stepping, feel that shift of weight.

00:04:32 Just keep doing this, really tuning into that.

00:04:36 See if you can still be breathing as you're doing it.

00:04:39 You might notice the hands might be doing weird things as you're focusing on the feet.

00:04:43 See if you can keep it relaxed.

00:04:46 And to continue with this, you could press pause now and continue exploring the walking

00:04:53 meditation for as long as you like.

00:04:56 But basically we're noticing the weight shift.

00:04:59 We're noticing the sensations in the legs, the arms may or may not be moving depending

00:05:04 on how fast you're going.

00:05:06 You're going to feel the contact on the floor and the rolling through the foot, usually

00:05:12 on the heel to the toe.

00:05:14 So just keep exploring this walking meditation.

00:05:26 And then when you're ready, pause for a moment.

00:05:31 And now let go of that and just walk normally.

00:05:38 Walk normally around the room, so at a quicker tempo.

00:05:43 So that little six foot space might not do.

00:05:45 You might have to go around chairs or wherever you go.

00:05:49 And here's your assignment.

00:05:52 As you're walking more quickly and with tempo, think a thought.

00:05:57 Either it's a memory or a plan.

00:06:00 So either remember what you had for breakfast or something that happened today, something

00:06:05 that's quite fresh in your mind that you can replay and just keep thinking that memory,

00:06:09 that thought.

00:06:11 Or you can think about something you're planning to do.

00:06:14 Something could be something you want in life, just something that you can, a thought you

00:06:18 can just really keep going.

00:06:19 So you've got to keep going with that thought, whether it's a memory in the past or a plan

00:06:24 in the future.

00:06:25 And as you're walking around now, now it's not mindfully feeling it.

00:06:30 Just walk as fast as you can.

00:06:33 Don't run into anything and keep thinking.

00:06:36 Don't stop the thinking.

00:06:37 So just do that for a while.

00:06:38 And if you want, you can press pause here, but I'm going to wait for a few moments for

00:06:41 that.

00:06:43 Keep walking.

00:06:44 Keep that thought going.

00:06:46 Just keep thinking as you're walking and don't run into anything.

00:06:50 That's it.

00:06:51 Think, walk, don't run into anything.

00:06:54 Just keep doing that.

00:06:56 And you may end up, and if you have a room of people, you might have to get out of the

00:07:00 way of people.

00:07:01 You might have to duck under something.

00:07:03 You might have to scoot around a chair.

00:07:06 The more quickly you're going, the more agility you'll need.

00:07:10 But keep the thinking.

00:07:12 Don't stop that thinking about the memory or what you're planning.

00:07:21 And as you keep the thinking going, thinking, walking, not running into things, thinking,

00:07:27 walking, not running into things.

00:07:30 And then when you're ready, drop the thinking and just notice that your body hasn't run

00:07:37 into anything.

00:07:38 How did it know to not run into anything?

00:07:42 And just notice that the body knows how to walk, knows how to balance, knows how to shift

00:07:46 weight, and you don't have to tune into it.

00:07:49 It's like a free ride.

00:07:50 It's like the body knows what to do.

00:07:52 So just kind of enjoy the free ride.

00:07:55 Continue walking and just notice the free ride.

00:07:59 Arms might be moving at the side naturally.

00:08:03 The torso knows how to shift, to turn, to balance.

00:08:07 Your focus can be kind of even coverage, just kind of holding this whole event, this kind
00:08:13 of global event happening that's just happening automatically and you're just getting this
00:08:19 free ride.

00:08:20 So your attention can be across the whole body or it could even be beyond the body.
00:08:26 Maybe you're noticing patterns.

00:08:28 But the main thing is to just notice the just happeningness.
00:08:34 It knows what to do.

00:08:35 There's a bouncy, expressive form of movement.

00:08:42 We tend to focus on what we need to accomplish, what we have to do, what are the results of
00:08:49 our actions going to be.

00:08:50 And maybe along the way, if we're mindfully trained, we're also tuning into sensory experience.
00:08:55 But what if we notice the things that happen automatically and enjoy that light ease of
00:09:02 them?

00:09:03 We can do this when we walk, wash dishes, chew, drive, any movement activity, yoga,
00:09:10 qigong, sports, playing musical instruments.

00:09:15 Many Olympic athletes talk about letting go of the thought before they start and just
00:09:19 letting the body do what it knows to do.

00:09:22 So we can enjoy this conditioned motor experience that the body knows what to do.
00:09:29 So play with the ease of that, I like to call it the free ride of auto walk or of auto anything.

00:09:39 And tune into that light, bouncy, just happeningness of your movement that you can enjoy without
00:09:50 effort.

00:09:53 I hope that's a helpful introduction to the technique of auto walk from Shinzen Young's
00:10:01 Unified Mindfulness System.