

Walking Meditation

Walking Meditation is a wonderful way of transforming something that we do every day into a deeply healing, deeply nourishing and enjoyable tool for our awakening. It is a practice found both in the Christian, Taoist, Buddhist and other religious traditions. When we practice walking meditation, each step of our journey becomes the destination - becomes peace and joy. Time required: ten to thirty minutes or?



Here's How:

1. It's wonderful to practice walking meditation any time that we are walking. When we're first learning the practice, however, it's best to set aside a particular time for it - say, first thing in the morning, or during your lunch break, or right before bed at night.
2. Walking meditation can be practiced indoors or outside. When the weather is nice, I like to practice outside, where I can be energized by the trees and sky. It's good to either go bare-foot (especially if you are inside) or wear shoes that give your feet and toes plenty of room to spread out.
3. Now, simply stand with your spine upright and your shoulders relaxed, letting your arms hang naturally by your sides. Take a couple of long, slow and deep breaths. As you exhale, let go of any unnecessary tension, smile gently, and let your attention flow deep into your belly, hips, legs and feet. Relax your pelvis, as though you had just mounted a horse. Feel your connection to the earth.
4. Next, begin to coordinate your breathing with taking small steps: as you inhale, step forward with your left foot; as you exhale, step forward with your right foot; and continue in this way. Let your gaze be focused gently on the ground in front of you. You can also experiment with taking several steps with the inhale, and several with the exhale. But keep the pace quite slow (slower than your habitual walking) and relaxed.
5. You can use phrase as you breath in and out such as: Breathing in "I have arrived"; Breathing out "I am home"
6. Walk this way - slowly, enjoying each step, with no thought of "getting somewhere" other than right where you are, here and now - for ten minutes or longer. Notice how you feel.
7. Little by little, incorporate this practice into your daily life - taking three or four slow, mindful steps. Notice how this changes the quality of your day.

Tips:

- ✓ Don't worry if this kind of walking feels awkward at first. We're learning to pay close attention to something that we're not used to paying close attention to. Little by little, it will start to feel quite natural.
- ✓ When you stretch out your feet and toes completely, and let the entire bottom of your foot be in contact with the ground, nerves, arteries and meridians connected to the entire body are stimulated - which is very beneficial for our health.
- ✓ Let your mind be focused and relaxed. If it wanders into thoughts of past or future, simply come back to the practice.
- ✓ Thich Nhat Hanh's "The Long Road Turns To Joy: A Guide To Walking Meditation" is a wonderful resource