

Mini-Walking Meditation

by Kerry MacLean

Mini-meditations act as speed bumps throughout the day. They are fun for kids, yet have a built-in mechanism to slow children down and help them grow a peaceful place inside. New mini-meditations added monthly!



Ages 2 years old to teens

Here's an all time favorite moving meditation for everyone, and it's especially helpful for really antsy, even kids with difficulty paying attention (even ADHD). Go for a walk around the block, through the park, or on a nature trail.

Agree ahead of time that there will be a 5-minute walking meditation during your outing.

If you make it a habit every time you go for a walk, everyone comes to look forward to it, because it really is a very pleasant meditation, once you get used to *slowing down*.

Have one of the children 'be' the starting gong, vocally mimicking the long, reverberating sound of a gong.

Everyone becomes quiet, walking very slowly, paying attention – not to the breath, but to the sensation of walking:

Feeling one foot lift off the ground, swing your leg through the air, press your foot down onto the earth; then... the other foot, again and again.

Have someone sound the ending 'gong' and go back to your normal pace. Sounds so simple, yet the results are profound!

The Practice of Walking Meditation

Live your daily life in a way such that you never lose yourself. When we are carried away by our worries, fears, cravings, anger, desire, we run away from ourselves, and lose ourselves. The practice is always to go back to oneself.

Thich Nhat Hanh

The Aim Of Walking Meditation:

Walking meditation is not about arriving at your destination or rushing to finish your walk, but simply being mindful that you are walking and that you are breathing. We arrive with every step. Walk leisurely and peacefully, with soft eyes and gentle breathing.

Five Guidelines For A Walking Meditation:

1: Gentle Belly Breathing:

Use a gentle belly breath to calm your thoughts, relax your body, hips, elbows, muscles, legs, face, eyes and ears.

Breathing in, "resting;" Breathing out, "softening."

2: Walking with soft eyes, looking at the ground:

Walk with soft eyes fixed on the ground about 8 feet out. Feel the sensation of each foot as it presses down onto the earth or floor. Notice your foot as it lifts up, touches the ground and is lifted up again. **Follow the movement and the feeling of each footstep with your mind and your breath.**

3: Counting or Reciting a Verse (gatha) for concentration (to remember we're meditating!)

To keep the mind focused on each step and each breath, count the number of steps to each inhalation and each exhalation. OR repeat a phrase or verse, e.g. "I have arrived, I am home, in the here, and in the now," or "I am walking on this green earth," or any words you like....

4: Half - Smiling:

It is said that a half-smile brings lightness to your feet, invites your body to relax and helps you settle more easily into the walking meditation. This is never to be forced, always optional!

5. Stop periodically to pay attention on purpose to one thing, with full mindfulness:

A flower, a color, a bird, a sound, a scent/smell, the wind, etc. Noticing body sensations, emotions, thoughts.

Then, looking deeply in order to simply see, smell, hear, touch whatever your attention is resting on. "Breathing in, breathing out, feeling my breathing in my ____, I know I am seeing this green leaf, moving gently in the breeze. (or hearing this ___ sound, or feeling this ___sensation).

Realizing: it has not always been here - it will not always be here; bringing awareness to the fact that all things change, all things are impermanent. I appreciate this leaf...

Breathing in, breathing out, feeling myself standing here, my feet touching the ground, feeling the length of my body, standing between earth and sky.

This practice makes the lead more real, and we become more real, too.

**Don't bring anxiety and stress
to the ground with your feet.** *Thich Nhat Hanh*

Adapted from Carole Fogarty <http://www.wellsphere.com/mind-body-article/walking-meditation/640172>

Walking Meditation: Variations

We arrive with each step, walking in order to walk, with full moment-to-moment awareness...

Formal Walking Meditation (indoors)

Pacing off 10 or 20 steps, or walking together with others in a circle:

Taking one step with the in-breath, one step with the out-breath.

Balancing is a challenge in slow-walking meditation. Ways to improve balance include – leaving the back foot down until really ready to lift it; imagining that we're a tiger, stalking!; practice helps!

Walking with awareness, noticing when awareness moves away from feet touching, breathing – naming /noting where the attention went, then returning to breathing and walking....

Formal Walking Meditation (Outdoors) Basic Walking Meditation

We walk outside at a slow-normal pace. This can be done when walking quickly, as well, or even while running, but it's best to train while walking at a slow-regular pace, for better concentration on the practice. It can be done alone or in a group.

Walking with awareness, noticing when awareness moves away from feet touching, breathing – naming /noting where the attention went, then returning to breathing and walking....

Gratitude Walking Meditation

Taking 30 to 50 steps mindfully (following all of above guidelines), then stopping – bringing awareness to one thing we appreciate or feel grateful for (or something that's not-wrong if that's all we can do at the time); resuming walking for another 30 to 50 steps, stopping for a mindful gratitude moment, and continue this way for whatever time you have allotted to the meditation.

LovingKindness Walking Meditation

Taking 30 to 50 steps mindfully (following all of above guidelines), then stopping – reciting a lovingkindness wish for ourselves (and/or for others), breathing in and breathing out with full awareness in the present moment of wishing ourselves /others well; observing any emotions that may arise, body sensations, thoughts, images; then resuming walking another 30 to 50 steps, sending another lovingkindness wish, and continuing on this way for the duration of your walking meditation time.

These, and others like them, can also be combined with formal walking meditation – e.g. as a way of beginning, for a few minutes, or at any time during the meditation. We can make the practice our own – experimenting to observe the experience of these different ways of meditating while walking.

Walking with a Difficulty Meditation:

Choosing either a basic walking meditation, or a gratitude or lovingkindness walking meditation

Following a period of working with a difficulty, for example using one of the transforming emotions/mindful acceptance practices (RAIN practice or Tree or Knots practice, for example):

Walking with a difficulty – as if we're walking next to it, knowing it's there, but not thinking about it; letting it be there with us without identifying with it as "me" (this is called "dis-identifying"). In other words, knowing that this difficulty is part of us, a part of our life – like it or not! – and letting it be, while we carry on walking with mindful awareness of our feet touching the ground, our breathing, and noticing where our attention goes – bringing it back in a gentle, friendly way to our feet and out breathing ...

The **gratitude walking meditation**, in particular, can offer emotional balancing for some people after working with a difficulty through the RAIN practice.

R. A. I. N.

*Allowing the gentle rain of practice
To prepare the earth of our self;
welcoming and nurturing beautiful seeds.*

Recognize

Hello, my _____, here you are;

Allow

*You're part of me, I know you very well.
I may not like you or want you,
but here you are.*

Investigate

- 1) I'll **STOP, BREATHING** *consciously,*
SCANNING *my body,* & **STRETCHING;**
- 2) Checking for **THOUGHTS & IMAGES**
→ back to **BREATHING IN & OUT**
- 3) Checking for **EMOTIONS**
→ back to **BREATHING IN & OUT**

DON'T KNOW:

What do I believe (a fear/worry/anger/or... belief)? DON'T KNOW!

HABIT ENERGY: *how do I react?*

*Is there **ANOTHER WAY:** to respond?*

→ **REHEARSE, PRACTICE, observe.....**

Non-identify

"I don't have to believe everything I think"

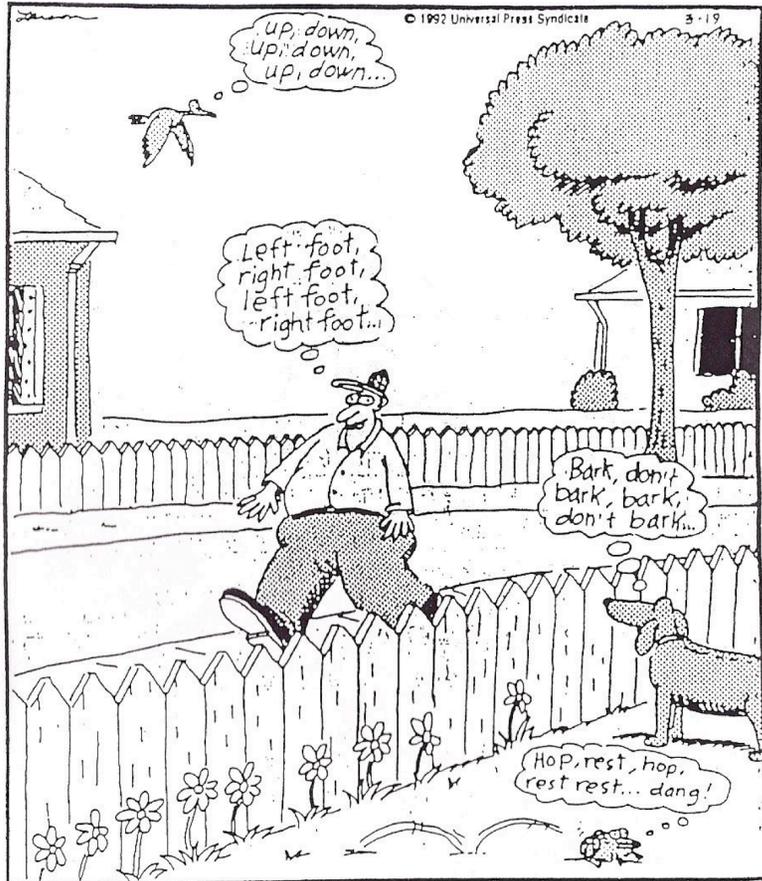
"I don't have to believe everything I feel"

I HAVE thoughts and emotions...

and CHOICES: to RESPOND and not REACT

REHEARSE, PRACTICE: Experiment, observing what happens.

THE FAR SIDE



Basic lives