

Walking Meditation

As we have heard and experienced during a number of our meetings , Mindfulness is always available to us as a living awareness of every moment in our lives.

We achieve and practice this by paying attention. It is a quality of being as fully present as possible to what is happening internally (thoughts, feelings, memories), externally (the world around us) and in the space between, that is, in our interactions with the world.

Our bodies can only be in one of 4 “postures’. We can be sitting, lying, standing or moving. We can bring awareness to all of these and in this way, Walking meditation is just another way of practicing awareness. We use the simple (or maybe not so simple ?) act of walking to sharpen the skill of paying attention.

As with most things in life, there are a number of ways of practicing and each us finds what works. Here are some ideas for you to explore and practice, as we did that evening in our group.

Start by standing still, feet about shoulder width apart and assume the tree posture. Upright, knees slightly bent, hips over knees, spine erect and upright, neck and head resting in a neutral way (not tilted to the side or front or back). Bringing awareness to the contact point of feet on floor, slowly lift one foot and noticing the slight shift in weight to the other leg. Keeping your attention on the forward moving foot and then the process of heel strike and the shift in weight as you land on that foot.

1. You can walk in a small circle if you are in a room at home or go for a long walk. It does not matter. The important thing is the noticing and becoming aware of the movements and shifts.
2. You may slow down at any point in the process to help bring an increased awareness to the process of noticing
3. There is no correct speed other than the one that enables you to be present to the movement
4. When your mind wanders off , notice that and bring it back to the act of feet moving .
5. Maybe notice the mystery of how our body does this, beyond thinking, with a natural smoothness and insight.
6. The following tips can help in keeping on task if your mind wanders a lot and you get into thinking or analyzing too much
 - a. Repeat silently ...lifting, stepping, placing....(pause)..... lifting, stepping , placing.....
 - b. Counting may help (right one, left one, right two, left two)
 - c. Keep attention on the underside of your foot and follow the different “ feeling” as it touches the ground and bears weight, then how that changes as you lift off
 - d. As you place your landing foot on the ground, imagine it is massaging the earth and noticing the contact of the earth massaging back
 - e. You can practice noticing the changes in posture, weight , feel of the non-moving foot.

You can find many variations on youtube videos with a quick search. How lucky we are to have all this choice in finding ways to learn what we want.

Again, the important thing is to be aware of what is happening in the moment, to be non judgmental when the mind goes off into doubt or wandering if you are doing it right or gets lost in watching the scenery. If lost, just stand still. The earth and your feet know where you are.

Have fun with experimenting.

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