



be fit for life
moving alberta

WALKING FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Walking is a great way to engage in physical activity and best of all, it is free and waiting for you outside your front door. Adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week.

WALKING FOR PHYSICAL HEALTH

Walking can contribute to increased cardiovascular fitness, stronger bones and muscles, reduced body fat, management of some medical conditions, and reduced risk of heart disease and stroke. Just 30 minutes a day can make a difference!

WALKING FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Walking can help improve your mood, increase concentration, help you to manage stress, and contribute to a better nights sleep. Add a meditation to your walk to practice being present in the moment to further enhance the benefits to your mental health.



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Mindful Walking

Use these walking meditations as a means to support your physical and mental health; combining mindfulness, being present in the moment and movement

MEDITATION: BREATH & MOVEMENT

As you begin your walk, take a few moments to pay attention to your breath. Pay attention to how your body is flowing through the movement of walking and breathing. Consider your posture, your arms and hands, your legs and the grounding of each foot as it firmly plants itself down in rhythmic order. Allow all parts of yourself to flow together, like a symphony playing its melody by heart. In your exhales breathe out all of the worries and thoughts and on the inhales breathe in the life that is present in this moment.

MEDITATION: THE SENSES

As you walk along, evoke your senses. What do you notice? What do you see, hear, smell or can touch in nature? Can you touch the branch of a tree or a tall shaft of grass as you pass by? Are there animals or birds along the way? What do you hear, what do you see? Is there a smell to the season? Is there a sense that can describe the air as it touches your face? As you continue your walk, gaze a little closer at ordinary things, see their shape, their color, how the sunlight falls within their space or their song. Consider what is interesting or beautiful in this moment, in this day and in this walk. As you continue to walk, you may become distracted with thoughts swirling around in your head and begin to miss all that is present to you. Gently bring yourself back to your breathing and look out past your mind and continue to focus on what is before you.

MEDITATION: CONNECTIONS

As you begin your walk, imagine that you are on assignment. Your goal is to find something interesting or beautiful in ordinary nature or in the environment around you. As you consider ordinary things, ponder the newness in discovering such treasures! It might help to imagine that this is the very first time you have ever been outside and you are discovering every detail for the very first time! With the lens of your mind's eye capture and hold each image. What do you see? Allow your imagination and curiosity to be ignited. Continue this exercise as you walk along breathing in all of life in joyful intent. Near the end of your walk, check in with yourself. Identify the feeling or emotion you are experiencing physically, emotionally, mentally or spiritually. This exercise can be done considering different themes (i.e. birds, trees, leaves, water etc.).



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"EVERYTHING THAT HAS A BEGINNING HAS AN ENDING. MAKE YOUR PEACE WITH THAT AND ALL WILL BE WELL"

Jack Kornfield

"PEOPLE USUALLY CONSIDER WALKING ON WATER OR IN THIN AIR A MIRACLE. BUT I THINK THE REAL MIRACLE IS NOT TO WALK EITHER ON WATER OR ON THIN AIR, BUT TO WALK ON EARTH. EVERY DAY WE ARE ENGAGED IN A MIRACLE WHICH WE DON'T EVEN RECOGNIZE: A BLUE SKY, WHITE CLOUDS, GREEN LEAVES, THE BLACK CURIOUS EYES OF A CHILD – OUR OWN TWO EYES. ALL IS A MIRACLE.

Thich Nhat Hanh



MEDITATION: GRATITUDE

As you step out the door to begin your walk, bring to mind something that you are grateful for. Perhaps it is just getting outside, breathing the fresh air, walking in the rain, the snow, the sunshine...the opportunity to just go for a walk. As you walk along, look for simple things along the way that stir up a sense of well-being or gratefulness. This could be seeing a robin, a puppy, the smile of a child or someone else walking, birds singing, or warm sunlight. Consider the wonder of movement, how every part of your body works together to propel you forward. Take a deep breath in and as you exhale, marvel the experience of breath, of movement and nature. Be quietly mindful of your breathing as you consider the wonders of ordinary moments and beauty. In your mind, take note of these things and if you can name the feeling or emotion you are experiencing physically, emotionally, mentally or spiritually. Choose to hold this gift in your heart for the rest of the day and if life becomes busy or burdened, mindfully return to soak in the gift that you carry – return as often as you wish – it is yours to have and to keep.



TRY IT AS A FAMILY!

BREATH & MOVEMENT:

Encourage family members to focus on their breath – inhaled and exhaled. Do a checklist in which you go over each part of the body as you walk from head to toes. How does each body part feel? Consider each body part contributing to a beautiful symphony. Which instruments do they play? What kind of song are they orchestrating?

THE SENSES:

Turn this meditation into a family conversation as you walk. Each family member may experience senses differently and it will be fun to explore what others share. Take the time to engage in other family members experiences. Don't be afraid to touch and smell what nature has to offer.

CONNECTIONS:

Encourage family members to use their hands and fingers to frame "photographs" as you walk. When someone takes a picture, have them share about the picture they took. Why did they take it? What about their picture is beautiful? How does it make them feel?

GRATITUDE:

As you walk, encourage family members to share about all the things they are grateful for. These things can be experienced on the walk or can be from every day life. When you think of these things, what kind of feelings do they stir up within you?

This resource was created in collaboration with Jordan Lynn Bell, M.A. Counselling, CPC