

**Basic** **Mindful Walking Practice**

Mindful walking practice is one of the best ways to help you to ground yourself in the present moment and to reconnect with your body when you are in your head and feeling the stress levels rising all around you. You can do it anywhere, at home, at work, out for a walk. At its simplest it involves slowing down, walk at half speed then half again- and then half again! The slower you can walk the better, because you will be able to notice much more in your body and also in the environment. If you are inside, you may wish to take ten steps or so and then turn around. Try doing the practice for a few minutes and building it up over time to half an hour or longer.

There are two main places to focus our attention during mindful walking practice.

**Body sensations – movement of the body as you walk**

From a standing position, notice the feelings (both proprioception, where your body is in space and time; and sensation, the feeling of touch with another surface) in your feet, toes, ankles, legs, rest of your body. As you prepare to move notice what happens in your body. As you raise your right or left foot off the ground see if you can slow things down and really pay attention to the mechanics of what is happening, describe it in your head like a journalist would on a second by second basis. Bring an attitude of curiosity and interest to the practice as if you had never taken a step before and this was the first time. Notice the full walking cycle of lifting- planting- lifting planting as you alternate between left and right.

**Using your five senses to focus on what is happening in the world out there**

Use your eyes to notice shapes, colours, textures, patterns, movement, stillness. Use your ears to notice sounds, pitch, tone, volume, frequency, silence. Use your nose to notice any smells or fragrance and your tongue to notice any sensations of taste. Use your hands to touch walls, leaves, bark, other surfaces you are in contact with.

In both practices, notice ‘where is my mind right now, is it where I want it to be?’. For most of us without years of training, our minds are rapidly all over the place, so gently and kindly escort your attention back to where you would like it to focus, and with a spirit of curiosity and discovery start your attention training practice again. Really enjoy the feeling of being in the present moment and being alive when you connect with your body or your senses.