

# Mindful Walking

“Our breathing has the function of helping our body and mind to calm down. As we walk, we can say, breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I bring peace into my body. Calming the breath calms the body and reduces any pain and tension.”

“Walking meditation is first and foremost a practice to bring body and mind together peacefully. No matter what we do, the place to start is to calm down, because when our mind and our body have calmed down, we see more clearly. When we see our anger or sadness clearly, it dissipates. We begin to feel more compassion for ourselves and others. We can only feel this when body and mind are united.”

“When we walk mindfully, we see the beauty and the wonder of the earth around us... If our mind is caught and preoccupied with our worries and suffering, we miss these things...When we look again at the earth and the sky, we see that the earth is a wonderful reality.”

“If we rush from one place to another, without practicing walking meditation, it is such a waste. What is walking for?...It’s just for walking...We have to let go of everything, and not seek or long or search for anything. There is enough for us to be happy.”

“We are made of body and mind. Our body can radiate the energy of peace and compassion. Our mind also has energy. The energy of the mind can be powerful. If the energy of the mind is filled with fear and anger, it can be very destructive. But if we sit mindfully, if we walk mindfully and reverently on the earth, we will generate the energies of mindfulness, of peace, and of compassion in both body and mind. This kind of energy can heal and transform.”

“The energy of peace and mindfulness does not come from elsewhere. It comes from us. It comes from our capacity to breathe, to walk, to sit mindfully and recognize the wonders of life.”

“Walk slowly, in a relaxed way. When you practice this way, your steps are those of the most secure person on earth. Feel the gravity that makes every step attach to the earth. With each step, you are grounded on the earth.”

While walking, practice conscious breathing by counting steps. Notice each breath and the number of steps you take as you breathe in and as you breathe out. Don’t try to control your breathing. Allow your lungs as much time and air as they need, and simply notice how many steps you take as your lungs fill up and how many you take as they empty, mindful of both your breath and your steps. The link is the counting.

When you walk uphill or downhill, the number of steps per breath will change. Always follow the needs of your lungs. You may notice that your exhalation is longer than your inhalation. You might find that you take three steps during your in-breath and four steps during your out-breath, or two steps, then three steps. If this is comfortable for you, please enjoy practicing this way. You can also try making the in-breath and the out-breath the same length, so that you take three steps with your in-breath and three with your out-breath. Keep walking and you will find the natural connection between your breath and your steps.

Don't forget to practice smiling. Your half-smile will bring calm and delight to your steps and your breath, and help sustain your attention. After practicing for half an hour or an hour, you will find that your breath, your steps, your counting, and your half-smile all blend together in a marvellous balance of mindfulness. Each step grounds us in the solidity of the earth. With each step we fully arrive in the present moment.

**THICH NHAT HANH**

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