



Reflect and discuss

Mindful walking



We often take walking for granted. But did you know that there are ways of walking that can lift our spirits and relieve anxiety?

Here's how Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh describes the Plum Village tradition of walking meditation:

*Walking in meditation means to walk in such a way that we **know** we are walking. We walk leisurely, enjoying every step. We become aware of the contact of our feet with the ground, and the flow of our breathing. We set ourselves free from our thinking—our regrets about the past, our fears and anxieties about the future, or our preoccupations in the present. We become 100% present with every step.*

*We become aware of the **contact** between our feet and the ground. And we begin **harmonize our steps with our breathing**. We may take two or three steps as we breathe in, and then three or four steps as we breathe out. It will depend on your lungs and the natural rhythm of your steps. As we continue walking, synchronising our breathing and our steps, we become aware of our **whole-body walking**. We can relax any tension in our shoulders or arms, and feel what a miracle it is to be walking on Earth. We can open our ears to the sounds around us, and lift up our eyes to enjoy the trees, or the horizon, or the people around us. Aware of our five senses, we know we have arrived in the present moment. Every step can be nourishing and every step can be healing.*

<https://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/>

Try it!

- Read aloud the excerpt on mindful walking
- Clear a space. Move things to make space, or find an area outside that will allow participants to comfortably move around in a circle.
- Start small. Set a timer for 3 minutes. (It takes time to get used to walking slowly and purposefully.)
- Take it easy. Show participants how to move by walking with slow, measured steps. Invite them to be aware of the in-and-out rhythm of their breath.
- Stay present. Remind participants that when we focus only on our walking and breathing, we take a break from our emotions.
- Try again. Reset the timer for another 3 minutes. Acknowledge that it might feel silly or strange at first to walk so sloooooowly. Encourage participants to think of it as skill building. Explain that they're learning how to separate from their feelings, enjoy the moment, and recharge!