

Mindful Walking Practice

As a means to support your whole being during the Thesis Boot Camp (not only your “thinking self”), please use these guidelines for a mindful walking break over lunch hour on the final day of the Boot Camp (or any time you feel like you could use a thinking break!). These are meant to be guidelines, not rigid rules. Disconnecting from thinking, and shifting into being will support your writing work, so do not worry about taking this time to be mindful. It is a useful time. You might consider doing this practice in Finnerty Gardens or on a grassy patch of the campus.

For Mindfulness Walking you simply need to get up and start moving. It doesn't matter where, and in some ways, it is better if you don't have a set destination in mind, as mindfulness is about the process as opposed to the outcome. So you just start walking.

As you are walking, **pay attention to your breathing**. Notice the sensations associated with breathing in and out. Pay attention to what parts of your body move as you breathe in and out. Spend a few minutes focusing your attention on the full experience of breathing. Immerse yourself completely in this experience. Imagine you are “riding the waves” of your own breathing.

Now expand your **awareness to the physical sensations in your body**. Notice what it feels like on the bottom of your feet with every step you take. Pay attention to the contraction and relaxation of muscles in your legs as you walk. Bring an expansive awareness to your body and the physical sensations that are associated with walking.

Bring your attention to your ears, **noticing all the sounds that you hear around you** as you walk. It may be the crunching of leaves underneath your feet or birds singing in the trees around you. Practice simply being open to all sounds where ever they arise. Do not go searching for sounds or holding on to the experience of certain sounds. Instead, just practice having an expansive awareness of all the sounds around you — sounds that are close, sounds that are far away, sounds that are soft, and sounds that are loud.

Practice connecting with the sounds. Notice if you are labelling the sounds that you hear. If you are labelling the sounds you hear, recognise this and then recommit to connecting with the experience of hearing and the quality of the sound.

Now **pay attention to what you see around you**. Notice all the images you see — images above, below, in front of, and to the side of you. Be aware of all the colours you see. As with sounds, practice simply being open to the experience of seeing without labelling or judging what you see.

Finally, **bring awareness to what you feel**. Notice the breeze against your skin. Notice any perspiration against your skin. Gently touch or pick up something natural and notice how it feels in your hand. Heavy or light? Rough or smooth? Warm or cool? Dry or damp? Notice how it effects how you feel inside. Remember there is no right or wrong answer to how you experience through your own senses. What you notice is what is there for you to be noticed.

Anytime that you notice that you are getting distracted by a thought (this is completely normal), notice what took you away from the present moment and bring your attention back to the experience of walking.

As you walk, gently shift your attention from one sensation to the next, taking in every experience in your internal and external environment.

And Breathe. Continue for 5-20 minutes.

Instructions taken from: <http://www.ianbanyard.com/home/cotswold-natural-mindfulness/mindfulness-walking-exercise/> (April 24, 2017)