

R.E.A.L GoalSM: Mindful Walking

(Realistic, Easy, Attainable, Life Goals)

Example: I will incorporate mindfulness while walking.

The benefits:

- Reduced stress
- Reduced blood pressure
- Increased feelings of well-being
- Better sleep
- Improved mood

How to:

Before you start, prepare the space. Removing your shoes is good if that's possible. And find a place where you can walk about 12-14 steps before turning.

First, notice your body as you stand in stillness. Feel the connection of the body to the ground or the floor (what do you see on the floor). Become aware of your surroundings (what do you see around you), take in any sights, smells, tastes, sounds, or other sensations (What does the air smell like? Is it humid or dry outside? What is the sound you hear? Where is it coming from?).

Notice any thoughts or emotions and let them be. Notice your arms by your sides, or if you prefer, hold your right hand in your left hand at the front or clasp your hands at your back. Notice your breath, moving in and out of your body. No need to change it; just let it be. Now, shift your weight to the left leg and begin to lift your right foot up. Move it forward and place it back down on the ground. Mindfully shift the weight to the right leg and begin to lift the left foot up, move it forward, and place it back down on the ground.

Continue with this walking pattern: walking mindfully, walking slowly. Pay attention to the sensations on the soles of your feet as each part of the sole, from heel to toe, touches the ground (what does the ground feel like, has it changed?). Lifting, moving, placing. Lifting, moving, placing. Notice how the body moves as you walk. Walk with awareness—one step at a time.

When it is time to turn, maintain the flow of mindfulness and bring your awareness to the intricate process of turning. Slowly and with attention to each movement necessary to turn, begin to walk back to where you started. One step at a time. Lifting, moving, placing, and lifting, moving, placing.

Find a rhythm that suits you, your body, and your balance.

As you move forward, notice your body, notice your head sitting on your shoulders, your arms and hands, your torso, your legs, moving you forward, step by step.

Notice any thoughts that arise and let them be—returning your focus to the sensation of walking and lifting, moving, and placing. Notice your breath. Has it moved into a rhythm that fits with your walking pace, step by step? There's no need to change your breathing, but you might find it has changed without noticing it.

Continue walking, taking care to notice each intricate movement required at the turns. One step at a time. Practice this for a moment.

And next time you return to your starting place, be still. Notice the sensations in your body; bring awareness to your breath. Notice the stillness when movement ceases. And appreciate the time you have spent today practicing mindfulness of walking. As you finish, consider how you might bring this kind of awareness into the rest of your day.

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