

Meditative Walk

Ramona Keens



The need for making any activity or discipline effective lies in our attention and our focus. It is almost akin to our having extra sensory powers to seeing, feeling and being more than usual. Contemplation or focus provides a fresh perspective to the mind which rejuvenates it for better understanding of what is to come. It transforms an ordinary exercise into an experience that promises renewal of body and mind, turning the whole practice from one of mere movement to a journey within.

Meditating while walking is one such method that ensures mental clarity and calmness that lingers long after the walk is completed. By focusing on the powers of meditation and the repetition of certain words and phrases, causes our attention to be centered and present. By focusing our attention on the movement and breath, negative self-talk becomes redundant, making way for silence of the mind and soul. This brings about a new mental pattern of staying focused and remaining in the present without being distracted by past or future worries that keep bordering around the mind.

The art of walking brings about benefits that elevate our moods and mental stamina. The ultimate goal of combining meditation and walking is to maximize these benefits even more.

But this does not mean that meditation cannot be combined with any other form of exercise as any exercise has its own benefits and values for specified practitioners. Walking however, is a form of bodily movement that is inherent in every human being. But the kind of walking that builds cardiovascular strength and mental control asks for a commitment of walking regularly and walking fast enough that breathing becomes slightly heavy. It is then that you will encounter the challenges that give your mind a workout too.

Meditative walking begins with the simple act of walking and with the recognition that walking has many comparables of life. It is the kind of walking that pushes you out of your comfort zone, past well-known patterns and paths. It feeds on curiosity and challenge. The newness heightens your senses and self-awareness that takes exercise beyond pulsating heart rates and calorie burning.

Meditative walking is walking with awareness, paying full attention on how you talk to yourself and relate to your body while walking. The words you use reflect some kind of an attitude that is more important than where you walk, when you walk, and how far you walk. Each step confronts the mental chatter that holds you back from progressing, just as each step offers a chance to unite with your innerself and your surroundings. Chanting positive affirmations like, "I am the center of the universe. I emanate positive energies to everyone who comes in contact with me. My existence is exactly what I want it to be," for example, creates a sense of achievement and provides an overall boost to keep on going with the mission in hand.

It reflects a willingness to seek more from your exercise regime. Take on the challenge of trying out something new and different every time you set out to walk. Take a new route or try a steeper trail or simply, walk with a spring in your feet. Explore beyond the ordinary with the aim of opening up new opportunities in your life.

The next step is mind control. Like with every one else, mental confrontation is a normal and common thing. Everybody has his fair share of self-talk that is non-stop and distracting even when the body is at rest. So, you are no different. And not many of us have learnt the art of silencing the mind to such an extent that the mind stays quiet and in sync with the body for a long time.

But instead of constantly battling the voices in your mind, be prudent with the choice of words or self-talk that takes place. Allow the self-talk to take place – instead replace them

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with positive and refreshing ideas and affirmations. The idea is to keep the mind focused in the present and involved with what is happening to your body and the nourishment that your body is getting. Keep bringing your attention back to the present every time your mind wanders off.

Create your own mantra or line of positive affirmations that you can repeat in easy access, so that you can chant this mantra throughout your walk, to still your mind. With practice, you will be able to develop a sense of quietness that your mind and soul will cherish for a long time. Also, this entire act of controlling the mind provides all the necessary nutrients for development, mentally and spiritually. You will find that your walks are becoming more and more valuable to you and you will be looking forward to your next walk, come rain or shine.

Keep your chants and mantra simple but powerful and effective. The last thing you want to do, is find yourself groping for the right words and the next sentence to complete your grammatically accurate affirmations. Do not strain your mind. Do not cause your brain to stop to wander off by trying to recollect your affirmation or mantra every time you start your walks. Be realistic with yourself, and chant something that is easy to commit to memory. But remember your mantras must be fulfilling and soul-nourishing.

Since there are no hard and fast rules as to how to integrate mantras and affirmations into your workout, chant your mantras only when you are already comfortable with your workout. Do not rush into it as soon as you have started. Take your time and allow for your body to adjust to the rhythm of your breath and pace, before you start your mantra. Remember, the idea is to keep it holistically inclined to the body rather than making it clinically formulated to the exercise. You want to feel the entire vibration of your mantra; you want to be able to see it in your mind's eye without missing too much of the scenery and happening around you. You want to be able to connect with that vibration inside and out, and the only way to allow this whole symbiotic experience to take place, is to allow your body to get into pace and allow your breathing to be adjusted and then chant your mantra away. This is all about transitions – allow the stages of your journey to unfold one by one, without putting too much pressure on yourself.

Meditative walks promote sensations that are beyond the norm – something that should be deeply encouraged amongst children and the elderly. The benefits that a person reaps from meditative walks are such that they continue to nourish the whole body, mind and soul, long after the session is over. There is nothing that can surpass the superiority of meditative walking, whether holistic or not. The best thing about the whole exercise is the affirmations bit. With constant reminders like, "I am powerful. I am successful in every thing I do. I attract all positive vibes in

my life all the time. I am happy with my body. I am an epitome of success and beauty," provides the center-stage for the future to come. Such affirmations boost your ego and your self-esteem such that no one can ever tear you down. You eventually become your affirmations and thus become living proof that you are at the highest of pinnacles. Affirmations are like beacons of faith that provide you with all the self-help modus of successful living. The more you chant these affirmations, the more you begin to believe it and the more you become a part of it. You then realize that your life is turning out for the better and things are all falling in place. You then become the "center of the universe", that you affirmatively chant in your meditative walks.

Remember however, that affirmations can only work if you are realistic about them. They have to not only appear real, but also possible. Be bold and confident that you are all that you say you are. Word your affirmations in the positive, fired with feelings. And most importantly, repeat your affirmations a hundred times, even a thousand times if you can, that it gives you the vibrations internally to emanate it externally. Dare to dream the impossible and make them possible.

Be sure to set realistic goals even for your body. But let your fitness level decide the extent and length in which you can walk. Walk for about half an hour initially and build your stamina from there and develop a practice that can sustain you till an hour or two maybe.

The key to meditative walking is not how fast you walk or how heavily you breathe; it is about maintaining a steady pace throughout the entire exercise that your heart is pumping healthily, your pores are perspiring, your internal organs are getting the necessary oxygen from the workout and your mind is being stilled with focus.

Start your regime with a minimum of three days a week and develop into a daily routine. Remember the more often you do something, the better you get at it. Also, you tend to set your body into operation mode when you practice daily. Check with your physician before you start on any exercise regime. See if your heart can handle the pressures of exercising. Or if you feel unsafe walking alone, ask a friend or partner to join in. But keep in mind that this is not the time for both of you to catch up with each other. Commit to each other that for the next half hour or for the duration of your walk, you will be concentrating on your innerself and be connecting within. So any conversations that need to be shared amongst the two of you should be done after or before the exercise.

For a habit to form, select a location and time of day when you want to do your meditative walks. Chart this down somewhere so that you have all your routes and plans thought of in advance. The earlier you plan out your exercise routine and path, the lesser hassle you have in getting on with your plan. **YL**